

URBAN THEATRE  
IN THE LOW COUNTRIES, 1400–1625

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URBAN THEATRE  
IN THE LOW COUNTRIES, 1400–1625

Edited by

Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé



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## INTRODUCTION

Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé

This collection of essays is concerned with a variety of plays which were themselves related to a complex political and religious situation in the urban centres of the Low Countries. In order to give a sense of the many political cross currents of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we therefore begin with a Historical Prologue. This is followed by a discussion of how the plays embody and reflect upon these circumstances and an indication of their contents. A Timeline and a Map of the Low Countries will be found after the Introduction.

### *Historical Prologue*

By the middle of the fifteenth century when the Chambers of Rhetoric were beginning to make their mark on the urban culture of the Low Countries, most of the southern provinces of the Low Countries were directly or indirectly governed by the House of Burgundy (see map). The first Duke of Burgundy, Philip of Valois, followed his father-in-law as ruler of Flanders, Artois, Nevers, and Rethel in 1384. Under the rule of his son, John the Fearless, and his grandson, Philip the Good, their territory and their influence expanded. By the middle of the fifteenth century the Burgundian Netherlands included most of the southern and northern provinces with the exception of the Duchy of Guelders and the province of Friesland. Philip the Good established himself as a major European ruler, and his territories, though not a nation-state such as England or France, were nevertheless thought of as a more or less cohesive realm.

In 1430 Philip established Brussels, in the Duchy of Brabant, as his main place of residence and government, and the city remained the centre of Burgundian and later Habsburg power for more than 150 years. Brussels also

developed into a centre of Burgundian culture, literature, music, painting, and all the fine arts.

The Dukes and their court spoke French; their subjects spoke French, German, and Dutch dialects. The complexity of 'Burgundian' culture is hard to define in a few phrases, but a curious and significant fact in terms of the drama and the Chambers of Rhetoric is that there existed a separation between the literary court culture of the Dukes and that of their subjects. That did not mean that there was no contact between the rulers and the dramatic and theatrical efforts of their subjects. On the contrary, the Chambers of Rhetoric gradually became more and more involved in the civic and religious culture of the towns. They participated in religious and civic processions and offered entertainment on occasions of state, such as royal entries or other official visits or in connection with royal weddings, births, and funerals. The Dukes were masters in the use of magnificent display to impress their subjects with their power, and in their turn the towns used theatrical display to impress their rulers. The civic processional culture which developed became a tool in the negotiation of a precarious balance of power between rulers and ruled.

Chambers of Rhetoric were established mainly in the Dutch-speaking provinces of Flanders and Brabant, and from the 1480s onwards in Holland, Zeeland, and Utrecht. By the beginning of the sixteenth century every town and quite a few villages had one or more Chambers and their participation in urban culture was taken for granted. Similar institutions developed in the French-speaking provinces of Artois, Tournai, and Hainault. In the areas where German dialects were spoken (Liège, Limburg) or in the north-eastern Dutch-speaking provinces (Guelders, Overijssel, Drente, Groningen, and Friesland) far fewer Chambers of Rhetoric were established and many did not last as long as those in the western provinces. The Burgundian Netherlands became synonymous with political and mercantile success and with a culture in which the arts flourished and whose citizens enjoyed a standard of living that was the envy of the rest of Europe.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of the fifteenth century the Burgundian dynasty was shattered: the fourth Duke, Charles the Bold, had dreams of personal glory and territorial expansion which came to nothing. Formally, most of the Low Countries were still part of the German Empire but the Dukes themselves were still vassals of the French kings. Charles desired to make himself completely independent of his French overlord, Louis XI, and to become the crowned head of a new kingdom,

<sup>1</sup> W. Blokmans and W. Prevenier, *The Burgundian Netherlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), *passim*.

as a vassal of the German Emperor, Frederick III. The new realm would include all the fiefs of the Burgundians in the Low Countries and France and would also re-establish the realm of the Emperor Lotharius which had come into being at the Treaty of Verdun in 843. Charles's ambitions did not stop at that: he had set his heart on closer links with Frederick III by means of a marriage alliance between Charles's daughter and heir Mary of Burgundy and Frederick's son Maximilian of Austria. In 1473, after months of negotiations, Charles's royal aspirations ended in great humiliation when Frederick at the last moment withdrew from the intended coronation in Trier. Five years later, in 1477, Charles died in the siege of Nancy in a disastrous campaign which aimed to re-establish his claims in the Duchy of Lorraine. His body was only discovered some days later, frozen stiff, robbed of clothes and jewels, attacked by wolves: *sic transit gloria mundi*.<sup>2</sup> Charles's death and the manner of it spelled the end of an era in which chivalrous dreams of glory had been re-erected but found wanting.

This left the Burgundian Netherlands in an extremely uncertain situation: Charles's heir, Mary of Burgundy, was only nineteen years old and had to contend immediately with fierce opposition in the Burgundian Netherlands. The provinces saw a chance to regain their autonomy and undo all that the centralization efforts of the ducal administration had achieved in the previous fifty years. Mary did marry Frederick III's son, the Habsburg prince Maximilian of Austria, and this did provide a measure of stability. However, it also drew the Low Countries into the Habsburg orbit, the more so as Mary died in 1482 leaving the succession to her three-year old son Philip (the Fair). Maximilian became regent and de facto ruler of the Burgundian Netherlands until Philip, at least in name, succeeded in 1493. Philip married the Spanish princess Joanna who would inherit the thrones of Aragon and Castille. Philip died in 1506, leaving a young wife who would succumb to mental illness and five children, amongst whom a son, Charles, who had been born in Gent in 1500.

The quirks of dynastic succession changed the fate of the Low Countries profoundly. The Burgundian efforts to create an autonomous cohesive state were not wholly undone, but now the Low Countries became part of a huge European conglomeration. Charles succeeded his father Philip the Fair as overlord of the Burgundian Netherlands in 1515, his Spanish grandfather Ferdinand as ruler of Aragon and Castille in 1516, and his Habsburg grandfather Maximilian as Holy Roman Emperor in 1519.

<sup>2</sup> H. P. H. Jansen, *Geschiedenis van de Middeleeuwen* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1988), p. 487.

The reign of the Burgundian Dukes had seen a constant tug of war between the rulers and the towns. The ducal administration had aimed at establishing centralization in secular terms politically and financially, and at reorganising the ecclesiastical administration so that Burgundian influence would be optimal there too. The towns had striven to retain or to enlarge their autonomy, especially in fiscal matters, and to maintain their influence in ecclesiastical issues too.

Burgundian policies had of course been influenced by the fluctuations in the relationship with France: after all, the ducal Valois dynasty was closely linked with the French royal house and owed allegiance to the French King for their possessions in France and for Flanders. Naturally, their other relationships, with England, with the Pope, with the German Emperor, had all been prominent factors which influenced the political and mercantile situation in the provinces.

However, with the rise of the Habsburgs and the meteoric increase in the territories over which Charles V ruled, the Low Countries became a small part, though an important one, of a vast empire. The tensions within the empire were great, but the tensions and conflicts with other powers, such as France, the Pope, the Turks, England, were even greater. Territories in the New World provided riches, but they too needed attention if they were not to fall to other European powers. Charles's vision of an empire which would encompass most if not all of the civilized Christian world turned out to be, was bound to be, a mirage, but he worked like a demon to realize it.

The special relationship between Charles, who was born in Gent, and his subjects in the Low Countries was perceived as advantageous by both sides, especially in hindsight. By contrast, his Spanish-born son Philip who would succeed him as King of Spain and overlord of the Netherlands in 1555 was seen as a foreign King. It was a relationship which came under severe strain even in the early years of Charles's rule when a new conflict arose in the empire, that between the divergent factions in the Church. Luther's writings reached the Low Countries almost as soon as they were published. In particular Antwerp, a commercial centre where goods and news and ideas from all the corners of the earth were imported and traded, was also a city of printers and a major force in the dissemination of the new religious notions.

The tensions which arose between the Habsburg rulers and their subjects in the Netherlands were fuelled by many conflicting interests but amongst them religious convictions were very prominent indeed. Charles issued Edict after Edict, the one more draconian than the other, but dissidence spread and in its wake came rebellion and in its turn reprisals. We shall see that, in the various contributions to this volume as well as in this Introduction, religious issues concerning the Rhetoricians will take a prominent place.

The Chambers were natural environments for discussion and exchanges of ideas, and this is reflected in plays such as those performed at Gent in 1539 which contained religious ideas deviating from the teachings of the Catholic Church. It did not mean that the Rhetoricians presenting these plays now all adhered to a Protestant ethos. However, when the plays became available in print the authorities woke up to the fact that the Chambers in general were potential havens for dissidents of all kinds and this explains their vehement reaction, as manifested in various Edicts.

It is a measure of the degree of autonomy which provinces and towns still possessed that in some towns dissident religious ideas were tolerated. Such was for instance the case of Amsterdam, where a very strong Baptist presence seems to have invaded the city council as well as the Chamber of Rhetoric. It was not until after an incident in which Anabaptists tried to take over the city government in May 1535 that the council of Amsterdam took action. Sixty-two heretics were executed in Amsterdam. Many were exiled and perhaps as many as two hundred were executed in the province of Holland in the next two years. The executions, much depicted in pamphlets and engravings, were fearsome, even taking into account the norms of the time.<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to get a cohesive picture of the rise of religious dissidence and of the measures taken to curtail it. Whereas the central authorities never wavered in their pursuit of heresy, towns and provinces tolerated or persecuted dissidents at different times and with varying zeal. The great upheaval caused by the Anabaptists in the north did not much affect the southern provinces. There a wave of persecution occurred, especially in Flanders, in 1544–45, in particular after the Peace of Crépy. This treaty brought to an end yet another conflict between France and the Empire, but one aspect of that pact was that the two rulers decided on a concerted effort to try and defeat the Turks and persecute the Protestants.

A similar effect followed upon the Peace of Cateau Cambrésis in 1559. By this time, there had been a change of ruler: Philip II of Spain had succeeded his father as overlord of the Low Countries. There was also a change in the nature of the Protestant threat: Lutheranism, Anabaptism, and a variety of sectarian groups had not disappeared but the threat of Calvinism, organized and militant, worried the authorities even more. The Peace of 1559, which brought to an end the last of the wars with France, was widely celebrated. The popular perception

<sup>3</sup> A. Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* (London: Hambledon, 1990), pp. 71–100.

was that at last peace would reign and bring a restoration of prosperity and calm to the provinces, but it also freed Philip II to pursue heresy with renewed vigour.

However, the tide of discontent and dissidence in many areas of public and religious life was not to be stemmed. In 1566, the *wonderjaar*, the *annus mirabilis*, a petition was presented to Philip's representative in the Low Countries, his sister Margaret of Parma. The supplicants consisted of a large group of nobles, amongst them many from the inner circle of power, the Order of the Golden Fleece, such as William of Orange, hitherto trusted favourite of the King. The petition, which became known as the Compromise of the Nobles, did not make specific demands but pleaded that the sovereign should respect the ancient privileges of the realm and it advocated a lenient approach to religious dissidence. Margaret, severely frightened, made promises, only to have them overturned by Philip who was not willing to give an inch in the matter of religious toleration.

Two years later, in 1568, armed conflict broke out between the army of the King and the army of the rebels, now headed by the Prince of Orange. It was not until eighty years later that the Peace of Münster would finally and formally bring to an end this war which had started between a legitimate King and his rebellious provinces. It was concluded between a King, ruler of an exhausted and defeated Spain, and a very small country with an unlikely form of government for the time: the Republic of the United Netherlands.

With hindsight one can discern a number of breaking points in the increasingly troubled relationships between the provinces and their rulers. Historians, notably Parker, have charted the stages in the Revolt and seen them as a number of revolts. Each of these had different immediate causes and effects but all, as transpired, moved inexorably towards an irreparable breakdown of trust between the rulers and the ruled and, it has to be said, between factions in the provinces as well.<sup>4</sup> One such point occurred in 1581 when the collective representative body of the provinces, the *Staten-Generaal*, offered the overlordship of the provinces to François, Duke of Anjou and the brother of Henri III of France. This was followed, in July 1581, by an Act of Abjuration declaring that Philip II was no longer accepted as the ruler of the Habsburg Netherlands.

The decades of confusion, conquest, reconquest, alliances, splits that followed did not bode well for the new fledgling nation. Six of the southern (French- and German-speaking) provinces, Hainault, Artois, Walloon Flanders, Tournai, Namur, Luxembourg, and Limburg, decided to submit themselves again to Philip's authority. Amongst the Dutch-speaking provinces, Dutch Flanders,

<sup>4</sup> G. Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (London: Penguin, 1977), passim.

Brabant, Zeeland, Holland, Friesland, Utrecht, Overijssel and Gelderland, and the Ommelanden, so many political and religious factions were against the new order that it is nothing short of a miracle that the Republic survived even in its gradually reduced form.

But survive it did, even with a succession of unsuccessful foreign leaders, even after the assassination of Orange in 1584, even after waves of Spanish reconquest. By 1589 the territories held by the 'rebel' *Staten-Generaal* consisted of Zeeland, Holland, Utrecht, and a narrow slice of Gelderland, roughly less than a quarter of the Habsburg Netherlands.<sup>5</sup>

In the following twenty years the Republic managed to claw back some of its territory and had to yield some of it again until in 1609 the Twelve-Year Truce of Antwerp brought respite to Spain and the Republic. Even though it would take another twenty-seven years before a final peace agreement was concluded, the Truce shaped the future of two countries. The Spanish Netherlands continued to be ruled by the Spanish, then by Austrian Habsburgs, then by Napoleon. It then emerged in the nineteenth century as the bilingual Kingdom of Belgium, today still divided by its languages. The Republic was if possible even more arbitrary in its territorial boundaries and deeply divided along political and religious fault lines. It managed to transform itself, after the Napoleonic defeat and a brief and unhappy reunification with the southern provinces, into the Kingdom of the Netherlands, ruled by descendants of William, Prince of Orange, to this day.

The fate of the Chambers of Rhetoric reflects the vicissitudes which beset the provinces. Recent research shows that, at least in the Republic, contrary to a commonly held view, the troubled years of war and of Calvinist repression did not kill the life of the Chambers. Especially in some areas of the province of Holland a revival of Rhetoricians culture can be discerned. Many changes affected the Chambers, but the new evidence also shows that a surprising number of them contributed to cultural life in different forms for a surprisingly long time to come. One recent assessment of the Chambers and their activities takes special account of their conscious educational intentions and the many ways in which that education was indebted to humanist ideas which in their turn were transmitted by the Chambers.<sup>6</sup> In the south the Chambers were sidelined in the Counter-Reformation campaign of the Spanish authorities and the Catholic

<sup>5</sup> See the map in Parker, *Dutch Revolt*, p. 212.

<sup>6</sup> A. C. van Dixhoorn, *Lustige Geesten: Rederijkers en hun kamers in het publieke leven van de Noordelijke Nederlanden in the vijftiende, zestiende en zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2004).



Church, but there too quite a few of them continued as a part of urban and rural cultural life.<sup>7</sup>

Since all the essays in this volume were written in English or translated into it, it is apparent that we should like the collection to increase the currency of ideas and information about the early drama of the Low Countries beyond their geographical boundaries. In a sense this task was already begun by the plays themselves as they were written within a number of differing linguistic disciplines, and the physical limits of the Low Countries were, in the period targeted, somewhat fluid. Besides this, such changes in physical and cultural boundaries have to be seen in a historical perspective of more than two centuries of rapid social, political, and religious change. The dominance of the Habsburg polity and the religious revolution of the Reformation are salient features, but perhaps not the only ones, as we shall see.

The complexities of the political and religious changes were matched by the variety of responses to them. In considering these we take account of the development of urban communities, which are at the heart of the political and social circumstances in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and which are the focus of much that follows in this collection of essays. Very considerable prosperity in the Low Countries in medieval times, with a broadly international scope for mercantile activities, had built up wealth, leisure, and expectations. We may well consider that the move of the Burgundian court to Brussels in 1430 was an indication of, as well as a contributor to, increasing economic and social well-being. For our purposes however, the notion of urban society need not necessarily be identified with very large conurbations so much as the tendency to live and think in terms of closely integrated towns and villages. It is also true that there were many smaller communities living in close proximity to one another. It has been suggested that the development of the larger centres gave rise to a 'city mentality', a set of attitudes and assumptions dependent on the rich interaction which became possible within them and through their contact with similar social groups alongside.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Anne Laure van Bruaene, *Om beters wille: Rederijkerskamers en de stedelijke cultuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden 1400–1650* (Gent: Universiteit Gent, forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> H. Pleij, 'The Function of Literature in Urban Societies in the later Middle Ages', *Dutch Crossing*, 29 (1986), 3–22 (p. 4); J. Cartwright on the Antwerp procession of 1558 (*Ommegang*), which he characterizes as having a carefully thought-out mercantile philosophy, 'Forms and their Uses: The Antwerp *Ommegangen*, 1550–1700', in *Festive Drama*, ed. by Meg Twycross (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), pp. 119–31 (p. 126). For the organization of communities in Dutch-

This is no doubt reflected in the frequency and popularity of many of the competitions set up and managed by the Chambers of Rhetoric, which, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, were adept at summoning towns and villages nearby and far away. On such occasions the participants might come from St Truiden or St Winoksbergen as well as from Antwerp or Amsterdam.

We begin with a number of features of the social and political milieux which were influential upon the nature of the drama produced by this urban society. These include some reflection of the religious stress and the changes that came about, together with aspects of political and social struggle. It is axiomatic, however, that the drama also contributed to such changes as well as reflecting them: indeed a number of the essays included here draw specific attention to ways in which drama became a means of effecting change, or perhaps a desire for it. After this we offer some reflections on the nature of the drama that came into being at this time. Among the attractions of this period are the variety of the dramatic material and its amplitude. It has been estimated that there are some six hundred plays surviving from this period, setting aside a large quantity of other paradramatic material. Much of this material remains in manuscript and is not generally known.

### *Society, Politics, Religion*

In this era of change there was both a traditional outlook as well as scope for radical reformism, and the history of the Low Countries turns upon how such opposing sets of mind could be related. But it is not necessarily a matter of polarized extremes: always there was a need for intermediate positions, for compromise and accommodation, even if these ways were not always adopted. At Amsterdam, in the 1520s, the city authorities were less than diligent in pursuing Baptists. In other places Lutheran practices were sometimes tolerated for a time. Notwithstanding the growing concern and suspicion about religious dissidence fomented amongst Rhetoricians, the Chambers continued to be a part of urban culture and to participate in civic and religious feasts and occasions. The stance of the central government became increasingly hostile to any activities which might have allowed religious debate, but at local levels Rhetoricians continued to be indispensable and very much part of urban culture.

and French-speaking areas, see L. Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 6–7.

The competition of 1539 at Gent galvanized the central authorities into vehement attacks, in print and in law, on Rhetoricians in general. Yet the city of Antwerp, sympathetic to Lutheran ideas, had approved the play produced by *De Violieren* (The Gillyflower) for this occasion, and this Chamber continued to participate actively in all manner of events long after 1539. The city was a centre of religious debate and controversy with fierce defendants of Catholicism as well as adherents to a great diversity of viewpoints. Even so, Antwerp remained a city with a lively Rhetoricians culture until 1585 when it became a centre of the Counter-Reformation. Moreover, as violence, confrontation, and repression intensified there was an increasing need for concealment, diplomacy, and outward compliance hiding dissent.<sup>9</sup> In many places the urban authorities were forced to exist and conduct their affairs even though subjected to influences from within, and also from without as the pressure from the Habsburgs mounted in the sixteenth century.

The Habsburg administration itself was somewhat tardy in recognizing the threat and the spread of the new religious ideas. When it did grasp the extent to which these had found a foothold in the Low Countries, in particular in the southern provinces of Brabant and Flanders, the countermeasures were fierce. Previously the Low Countries had a fairly ineffectual episcopal inquisition, but the Habsburg administration allied itself with Rome in 1522 in setting up a special apostolic inquisition. Heretics could now be pursued and punished not only by the ecclesiastical courts but by the secular courts as well. This was in direct opposition to the privilege held by many towns and provinces: the right to dispense justice and to punish crimes committed within their own jurisdiction. This 'Spanish Inquisition' became the most hated of all Habsburg institutions. Catholics and Protestants alike agitated against it and sought to circumvent and abort its gruesome measures. Nobles and commoners, city magistrates and provincial councils all had good reason to fear and abhor the inquisitors and their powers. Charles V as well as Philip II allied themselves with their traditional enemy, France, in order to try to root out heresy. After the Peace of Crépy (1544) a vicious anti-heresy campaign was conducted. The Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) was widely celebrated in the Low Countries with Rhetoricians plays written specially for the occasion.<sup>10</sup> What was perhaps obscured from most

<sup>9</sup> This is sometimes called Nicodemism, G. K. Waite, *Reformers on Stage: Popular Drama and Religious Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515–1556* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 51–78, 103.

<sup>10</sup> L. Jansz.'s play *Meestal die om Pais roepen* was written on the occasion of this peace treaty but it concentrated upon the miseries of war. See Elsa Strietman, 'A Tale of Two Cities:

contemporaries was that the peace negotiations also contained another concerted Franco-Spanish attempt to persecute and punish heretics more efficiently.<sup>11</sup>

It had long been a feature of public life to mark significant events such as imperial accessions or dynastic events with processions. The Burgundian court realized, at an early stage, that Chambers of Rhetoric could be employed to promote the ducal policies.<sup>12</sup> In 1458, after a particularly acrimonious conflict between Philip the Good and the city of Gent, a Royal Entry was staged with the aim of impressing on the defeated city just how powerful their prince was. But even though Philip had the upper hand, the festivities orchestrated by the city, the procession with tableaux vivants, the splendid banquet, and the plays, show that such occasions were important diplomatic events for both sides. Duke and city displayed their strengths and their wealth and in so doing subtly renegotiated and reformulated their mutual dependence. This illustrates the increasing involvement of the Chambers of Rhetoric in almost every aspect of such events.<sup>13</sup> They were essentially demonstrations of power, and yet even here we can observe a process of negotiation between conflicting political ideologies and a rich reflection of the complexities of influence and counter-influence.

Under the Habsburgs, the circumstances and indeed the fate of the individual communities were partly determined by the need of the Emperor to manage them as part of a larger entity, which included his many possessions in central Europe and Spain. Even though Philip II did not succeed his father on the imperial throne but only as King of Spain, that did not really change: Spain's possessions were still extensive and diverse. Some of the problems arising for both rulers and their successors were related to what now might be called nationalism, as individual communities sought to establish and sustain their identity. It is, however, apparent that national boundaries, in the sense that we might under-

Drama and the Community in the Low Countries', in *Drama and Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Alan Hindley (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 126–47 (pp. 139–41).

<sup>11</sup> Parker, *Dutch Revolt*, pp. 61–64.

<sup>12</sup> Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, p. 189, n. 2.

<sup>13</sup> J. Dhanens, 'De Blijde Inkomst van Filips de Goede en de plastische kunsten te Gent', in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie van Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten in België* (Gent: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren, en Schone Kunsten van België, 1987), pp. 48, 53–89; Elsa Strietman, 'Pawns or Prime Movers? The Rhetoricians in the Struggle for Power in the Netherlands', *European Medieval Drama*, 2 (1998), 111–21; G. Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy, and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), passim.

stand them today, were hardly ascertainable. This was particularly so in the Low Countries and it might, in turn, explain why individual urban communities were so important.

The origins of the Chambers of Rhetoric were diverse: some evolved from devotional lay brotherhoods; some from groups which looked after the entertainment at competitions of Archers' Guilds; and some were formed in neighbourhoods. Several of these retained an independent existence and avoided being absorbed into Chambers. Rhetoricians Chambers and other such groups consisted of amateurs even though the playwrights could be deemed to be professional in that they could be in the service of a particular Chamber, or they were town poets, priests, or men of letters in a more general way. The devotional element, to Our Lady, to a patron saint, or to a particular Christian notion (The Book, The Sacred Heart), remained strong when informal groups were made into more formalized Chambers of Rhetoric. Membership of the Chambers did not depend in general upon class or craft affiliation. The move of the Burgundian court to Brussels in 1430 influenced the development of urban culture, including drama, in that the interaction between the Duke and the cities increased political tension.

In 1448 the town of Gent ratified the statutes of the Chamber of Rhetoric *De Fontaine* (The Fountain).<sup>14</sup> This ratification heralds the expansion in this form of social activity, which is fundamental to urban drama. It also shows that towns had begun to value the contribution to urban events and prestige that Chambers of Rhetoric could make. *De Fontaine* was a long-established devotional brotherhood with its own chapel and altar in St Nicholas, the main church in Gent. Its new official sanction would enhance its financial prospects and improve its organizational and artistic possibilities. By 1496 as many as twenty-eight Chambers were assembled at a competition in Antwerp.<sup>15</sup> This happened well before the Reformation, though there were some antecedents of it throughout Europe in the fifteenth century. By the time Luther presented his theses in 1517, a good deal of criticism of the established religion was already in the public domain, and

<sup>14</sup> D. Coigneau, '9 December 1448: De statuten van rederijkerskamer De Fontaine worden officieel erkend door de stad Gent', in *Een theatergeschiedenis der Nederlanden: Tien eeuwen drama en theater in Nederland en Vlaanderen*, ed. by R. L. Erenstein and others (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), pp. 50–55; A. van Elslander, 'De Instelbrief van de Rederijkerskamer "De Fontaine" te Gent (9 december 1448)', *Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Soevereine Hoofdkamer van Retorica 'De Fontaine' te Gent*, 5 (1948–49), 15–22.

<sup>15</sup> Elsa Strietman and Lynette Muir, 'The Low Countries', in *The Medieval European Stage 500–1500*, ed. by William Tydeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 485–553 (p. 509).

it is a feature of the work of many Rhetoricians Chambers that they showed a vein of anti-clerical satire. But, like many of Chaucer's thrusts in *The Canterbury Tales* (1385–1400), much of this should probably be seen as reform from within. Most likely it was looked upon as something which might have been contained within existing social and ecclesiastical structures rather than necessarily threatening their destruction: in short what has come to be regarded as an Erasmian policy. For some people who pursued such criticism, a radical change in belief and in the status of the Church not only would have been undesirable, it was also unimaginable. Many of the Chambers were developed from long established medieval religious guilds and fraternities as was *De Violieren* in Antwerp, which was closely linked with the Painters' Guild of St Luke, and these ancient allegiances must have been a force to reckon with in matters of belief.<sup>16</sup>

It is also significant that Antwerp became an international centre for printing at about this time. The Reformation was predicated upon the spread of print culture, as people strove to come to terms with matters of belief in written form. This undoubtedly had an impact on the dissemination of dramatic texts, and yet paradoxically a great deal of the material available to us has remained unprinted.<sup>17</sup>

There is sufficient evidence that Rhetoricians frowned upon the notion of printing their plays, on a par with asking money for them, as rather vulgar and self-seeking. The task of the poet was to write to honour the noble art of Rhetoric; if that in turn brought honour to the poet it was to be welcomed and cherished. Not until the second half of the sixteenth century does the printing of plays, especially competition plays, become more accepted.<sup>18</sup> A notable exception to this was the printed edition of the plays written for and performed in the competition in Gent in 1539. Very likely these plays were printed because of their emphasis on religious ideas which deviated from Catholic orthodoxy.<sup>19</sup> Joos

<sup>16</sup> See Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, p. 36.

<sup>17</sup> For the spread of Lutheran and Calvinist material through the medium of print, see W. Waterschoot, 'De rederijkerskamers en de doorbraak van de reformatie in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden', *Jaarboek 'De Fonteyne'*, 45–46 (1995–96), 141–53.

<sup>18</sup> N. Moser, *De strijd voor rhetorica: Poëtica en positie van rederijkers in Vlaanderen, Brabant, Zeeland en Holland tussen 1450 en 1620* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001), p. 14; H. Pleij, 'De betekenis van de beginnende drukpers voor de ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse literatuur in Noord en Zuid', *Spektator*, 21.3 (1992), 234–35.

<sup>19</sup> W. M. H. Hummelen, '21 Augustus 1539: De eerste bundel met rederijkersspelen die bij een wedstrijd opgevoerd zijn, komt uit bij Joos Lambrecht Letterstekker te Gent', in *Een*

Lambrecht, the printer who undertook this task, must have had a good idea that this was going to be a viable commercial proposition; it would seem that the initiative was his own, not that of the organizing Chamber, *De Fonteine*. The other well-known example of a printed edition of competition plays appeared at Antwerp in 1561. Famed for its splendour, this contest avoided any confrontation with the authorities and no one could possibly have found anything controversial in the texts. The beneficial influence of Mercury and merchants was a prominent theme in the competition; Willem Silvius, the printer, clearly saw a mercurial triumph in the dissemination of the performed texts.

After Luther's work began to be well known, measures to control and indeed suppress it soon became a feature in some urban communities, but generalization is difficult in the light of the many differentiating features in individual localities. For example, there were some festivities, presumably in support of the imperial family, at the Joyous Entry of Charles V into his native Gent in 1531, whilst on the other hand, Gary Waite has noted that of seventy-nine plays datable between 1520 and 1556 about half were demonstrably Protestant.<sup>20</sup>

The spread of Anabaptist beliefs quickly undermined many aspects of social and religious life in the 1520s. Amsterdam became a centre for Anabaptists, and some of its Rhetoricians were forced to undertake a pilgrimage to Rome in 1533 as a punishment for having performed an unauthorized, uncensored play with suspected Anabaptist sympathies. In May 1535 a group of Anabaptists was executed in Amsterdam after an attack on the Town Hall; in that case too some Rhetoricians were implicated. Even the fall of their besieged community at Münster in 1535 did not necessarily bring their influence to an end: radical Anabaptism emerged in Gent in 1539 and 1540. Menno Simons's meeker brand of Anabaptism continued to attract followers after the 1540s and far beyond.<sup>21</sup>

*theatergeschiedenis der Nederlanden*, ed. by Erenstein and others, pp. 98–99; W. Waterschoot, 'De Gentse drukkers Joos Lambrecht en Jan Cauwel', *De Zeventiende Eeuw*, 8.1 (1992), 27–32 (pp. 28–29).

<sup>20</sup> Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, pp. 104–01; J. Decavele, *De dageraad van de reformatie in Vlaanderen (1520–1565)*, 2 vols (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie van voor Wetenschappen, Letteren, en Schone Kunsten België, 1975), 1, 193–230.

<sup>21</sup> For Anabaptist influence, individual Rhetoricians who became Protestants, and Anabaptists who were Rhetoricians, see L. Verduin, 'The Chambers of Rhetoric and Anabaptist Origins in the Low Countries', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 34 (1960), 192–96. G. K. Waite enlarges on individual Rhetoricians in 'Popular Drama and Radical Religion: The Chambers of Rhetoric and Anabaptism in the Netherlands', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 65 (1991), 227–55.

The Rhetoricians competition in Gent in 1539 is a landmark in the history of the interaction between drama and the political turmoil now developing. Of the nineteen plays performed then at least four, and probably several others, embodied Lutheran interpretations of various kinds, while a similar number exhibited Catholic preoccupations.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, there was an uprising against the Catholic Habsburg authorities a few weeks later, which was put down with severity. The Chancellor of Brabant complained that the plays were ‘plain de malvaises et abusives doctrines et séductions de tout tendant à l’opinion luthérienne’.<sup>23</sup> In response Charles made an armed appearance in Gent in February 1540. And yet, in spite of all this, the plays from the competition were printed and then reprinted four times up to 1564. The vehement reaction from the Habsburg authorities to the first publication, which was then put on the Index of prohibited books, and the increasingly severe censorship clearly did not prevent further dissemination of the plays.<sup>24</sup>

It is worth noting too that these events occurred near the end of the life of one of the most famous of the Rhetoricians dramatists, Cornelis Everaert. We know of thirty-five plays by him, written in his capacity as *factor*, official poet, of two Chambers of Rhetoric at Bruges, *De Drie Santinnen* (The Three Women Saints) and *De Helichs Gheest* (The Holy Spirit). They sustained many aspects of Catholic doctrine, such as a defence of transubstantiation, right up until the time of the Gent competition, and yet the Bruges play presented on that occasion, which was probably written by Everaert, showed signs of Lutheran thinking. His earlier work also reflected very considerable anxiety about the social effects of war, and this became a constant theme in many other Rhetoricians plays. In the 1550s, *De bekeeringhe Pauli* (*The Conversion of Paul*), written for the Vilvoorde Chamber *De Goutbloem* (The Marigold), placed emphasis on God’s Word and the key Lutheran ideas of *solus Christus*, predestination, the rejection of idolatry, and the defence of the elect. The Emperor himself was identified with Herod.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> P. Brachin, ‘La “Fête de Rhétorique” de Gand (1539)’, in *Fêtes et ceremonies au Temps de Charles Quint*, ed. by J. Jacquot (Paris: CNRS (Jacquot), 1975), pp. 257–74; J. B. Drewes, ‘Het interpreteren van godsdienstige spelen van zinne’, *Jaarboek ‘De Fonteyne’*, 29 (1978–79), 5–124.

<sup>23</sup> Waterschoot, ‘De rederijkerskamers en de doorbraak van de reformatie in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden’, p. 146.

<sup>24</sup> A. L. van Bruaene, ‘Printing Plays: The Publication of the Ghent Plays of 1539 and the Reaction of the Authorities’, *Dutch Crossing*, 24 (2000), 265–84 (pp. 270–73).

<sup>25</sup> Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, pp. 177–78, 190, 318, n. 45. *De bekeeringhe Pauli* was edited by G. J. Steenberghe (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1953).



By the time of the famous *Landjuweel* in Antwerp in 1561 the pressure on the Rhetoricians had increased and the resulting plays were much more circumspect, even anodyne.<sup>26</sup> The set topics for various categories of theatrical events did not invite or address overtly religious issues: the subject of the entertainment known as *poëtisch punt*, an allegorical tableau vivant, was 'peace'; the prologue plays had to answer the question 'how useful for us are honest merchants?'. The most important category, the *spelen van sinne* (the moralities), had to deal with the question 'what is the greatest inspiration for the arts?'. This could, and did, evoke the traditional answer, 'the Holy Spirit', but 'love', 'fame', 'honour' also featured in the responses. It departed from the traditional devotional topics and interpretations towards more worldly, humanist-renaissance ideas. This theme was, in many ways, a demonstration of 'the way we live now', but it did not encourage religious or indeed political debate.

There is much evidence of a more critical context for the work of the Rhetoricians in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Criticism and complaints had accompanied the Rhetoricians from the beginning. Though traditionally there was in some quarters a distrust of 'drama' and 'actors' in the Catholic Church, the impact of religious dissidence served to increase suspicion. Another potentially controversial element was 'rhetoric' itself.

The Burgundian court was quick to acknowledge the usefulness of the Rhetoricians in propaganda and public relations. Towns and cities everywhere saw that prestige and negotiating power could be derived from their Chambers. Processional theatrical activities, poetry and plays, could be used to further a cause; by the same token they could foment disagreement, unrest, controversy. Hearts and minds could be won by opposing parties and interest groups.

The Habsburgs made copious use of processions and entries. The realization that religious controversy and political opposition found natural sounding boards in the plays and the poems of the Chambers came as a most unwelcome shock. The outraged tone of the 1540 Edict, which prohibited any public gathering, any

<sup>26</sup> The term *landjuweel* referred to an exclusively Brabant series of competitions held, in principle, every three years. The winner of the competition became the organizer of the next event. The word signifies the *juwelen* (jewels), the prizes to be won for the various parts of the competition, often chalices made of silver. See E. van Autenboer, *Het Brabants landjuweel der rederijkers (1515–1561)* (Middelburg: Merlin, 1981).

<sup>27</sup> H. Pleij, 'The Despisers of Rhetoric: Origins and Significance of Attacks on the Art of the Rhetoricians (Rederijkers) in the Sixteenth Century', in *Rhetoric – Rhétoriciens – Rederijkers*, ed. by J. Koopmans, M. A. Meadow, K. Meerhoff, and M. Spies (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1995), pp. 157–74.

theatrical activity, any publication that had not been thoroughly vetted and approved beforehand, demonstrates that the authorities had finally realized that the pen and the word were weapons to be feared. Added to this, the Rhetoricians had to field criticism from humanist and later Renaissance scholars and men of letters who saw them as despoilers of the noble art of rhetoric.<sup>28</sup>

Notwithstanding increased scrutiny and censorship, underlying tensions between the authorities and the Rhetoricians continued to exist. In 1551, Frans Fraet was allowed to establish a printing business in Antwerp, and in the following years he published a number of Protestant books, some of which showed the incipient influence of Calvin whose ideas had begun to circulate in the Low Countries from the late 1540s. He was also a *factor* for *De Goutbloem* and *De Violieren* in Antwerp. Eventually he was executed in 1558 on a charge relating to his publications. As G. Parker has put it: 'Very often the bridge by which the educated passed from Erasmus to Calvin was provided by a curious Netherlands institution: the chambers of rhetoric.'<sup>29</sup> The unprecedented outburst of the *beeldenstorm*, the 'image breaking', in 1566 resulted in further repression, and violence erupted in the so-called 'Spanish Fury' of 1576. This was in effect an attack on Antwerp by Spanish forces which had gone totally out of control because they had not been paid. There was also Calvinist inspired violence at Haarlem, this time the victims being Catholic.<sup>30</sup>

### *The Chambers of Rhetoric and the Traditions of Urban Drama*

So far we have indicated some of the ways in which the Rhetoricians related to the politics of the time. Let us now turn more specifically to the kind of drama they created and its performance. In order to put this into context we need to look at some other types of drama which were actively presented at the time. Though not exactly plays, the Royal Entries used much material which could

<sup>28</sup> Van Bruaene, 'Printing Plays', p. 269; Moser, *De strijd voor rhetorica*, pp. 9–20, 194–202.

<sup>29</sup> Parker, *Dutch Revolt*, p. 59. For Frans Fraet, see Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, pp. 170–71.

<sup>30</sup> For Antwerp, see Parker, *Dutch Revolt*, pp. 169–78; B. A. M. Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren: Toneelkunst en processiecultuur in Oudenaarde tussen Middeleeuwen en Moderne Tijd* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), pp. 195–96, 243–44; and for Haarlem, see Elsa Strietman, 'The Verbal Made Visual: The Allegorization of Moral Corruption and Political Debate in the Plays of Louis Jansz. of Haarlem', *European Medieval Drama*, 5 (2001), 175–89 (pp. 175–77), in connection with the playwright Lauris Jansz., the *factor* of one of the Haarlem Chambers, *De Wyngaertrancken* (The Vine Branches).

shade into dramatic experience, and it is plain that in many urban centres they formed a substantial part of public shows. Whilst many processions were set up for particular circumstances, some cities had their own continuing traditions. At Oudenaarde, where wagon plays were performed on *slepen* (carts) and also on fixed stages, performances were arranged by street and neighbourhood groups, confraternities, and groups from suburbs and neighbouring towns.<sup>31</sup>

Most of the plays discussed by our contributors may be called morality plays (*spelen van sinne*), often written in response to a declared theme at a Rhetoricians competition. These form the bulk of the surviving drama and they were composed more or less throughout the whole period under review. Apart from these, to which we shall return shortly, there are other dramatic traditions such as biblical drama and farces. The tradition of processions is one of the strongest, and the contribution on the *Bliscapen* from Brussels and that on the Lille plays reflect aspects of their dramatic potency. The former, based on the Seven Joys of Mary, took place in a cyclic performance repeated in seven annual instalments at which one of the Joys was celebrated in turn. Surviving evidence shows that this cyclic method lasted from as early as 1448 until 1556. Each of these annual events consisted of a procession of floats, in the morning, with living actors apparently using mime and accompanied by music, followed, in the afternoon, by a stationary dramatic performance in the marketplace, which formed a great arena, likened by one observer to the Coliseum. Though only the texts of *Die Eerste Bliscap van Maria* (*The First Joy of Mary*) and *Die Sevenste Bliscap van onser Vrouwen* (*The Seventh Joy of Our Lady*) have survived, they are sufficient to show that for the dramatic part the spectacle was sustained by vigorous dialogue and characterization.<sup>32</sup>

The Lille plays, being in French, remind us of the cultural diversity of the Low Countries. They offer us a long history and one which contained many changes. Primarily, the event, dating back to 1270, was a civic and religious procession, on the Sunday after Trinity in honour of the Virgin, and it was this which generated the plays. Over the years it comprised mystery plays and farces, and the mode of representation was diverse. Not only did the procession itself contain tableaux vivants but there were also mimed performances by youth groups along the way. The surviving texts, probably written down between 1485

<sup>31</sup> Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren*, pp. 196, 202.

<sup>32</sup> For the surviving texts and the background information, see *Die eerste bliscap van Maria en Die sevenste bliscap van Onser Vrouwen*, ed. by W. H. Beuken (Culemborg: Tjeenk Willink/Noorduijn, 1978).

and 1490, are plays which were performed on the main square before the *echevins* (aldermen) at the end of the procession. They are supported by extensive documentation illustrating the importance for the city of this ceremonial occasion. Once again there was a competitive element, prizes being awarded for performance there and elsewhere.<sup>33</sup>

There are two further examples illustrating the complexity and diversity of the dramatic tradition in which the Rhetoricians plays were situated. The so-called *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*, originating near Cologne, written in a Ripuarian dialect, appeared very early in the period. There is otherwise no connection between liturgical drama and Rhetoricians drama except in one or two cases where elements of the liturgy are embedded in a play.<sup>34</sup> The presence of material from Hainault makes it clear that the activities of the Rhetoricians were not confined to Dutch-speaking areas. In the French-speaking areas too there was a similar civic and dramatic culture. Evidence of the richness of dramatic tradition has come down to us in the form of pictorial illustration. There are many surviving pictures of scenes in towns and villages where the village fair contained a small stage and a performance in progress. Whilst most of the performers in the plays we have been considering were amateurs, there was a professional element to be found in the *kamerspelers*. These were rather diverse entertainers, soloists or small groups, who turned up with puppetry, acrobatics, and juggling, as well as performing in farces (usually in masks to allow for doubling).<sup>35</sup> There is evidence that before 1600 Italian actors, probably working within the conventions of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, appeared in Gent.<sup>36</sup>

The dramatic culture of the Low Countries had a number of other strands. *Sotterniën* (farces) were always popular and were often presented alongside serious material, as was the case at Lille.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Les Mystères de la Procession de Lille*, vol. 1: *Le Pentateuque*, ed. by Alan E. Knight (Geneva: Droz, 2001), pp. 52–57. See glossary for *refereynen* and *tafelspelen*.

<sup>34</sup> See *Het spel van de Vroede ende de Vdwaeze maegden*, ed. by M. Hoebeke (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1979), passim; see for text and translation Happé and Strietman (forthcoming).

<sup>35</sup> For a wheeled stage, see W. M. H. Hummelen, 'Toneel op de Kermis, van Breughel tot Bredero', *Oud-Holland*, 103 (1989), 1–46; and for *kamerspelers*, see his 'Kamerspelers: professionele tegenspelers van de rederijkers', *Oud-Holland*, 110 (1996), 117–34.

<sup>36</sup> R. L. Erenstein, '1576. Eerste commedia dell'arte voorstellingen in Antwerpen en Gent', in *Een theatre geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, ed. by Erenstein and others, pp. 126–33 (p. 126).

<sup>37</sup> *Les Mystères de la Procession de Lille*, ed. by Knight, p. 54.

The ten *abele spelen*, four serious secular plays and six farces, though available to us only as early texts without much context for performance, suggest that there was a mode of drama dependent on narrative material associated with romance story-telling. To an extent they were predicated upon chivalric values, but on closer inspection they reveal thoroughly 'bourgeois' concerns.<sup>38</sup> In the sixteenth century the impact of humanism is also discernible with, amongst others, a rich diversity of school drama. Plays written in conformity with such ideas also influenced religious controversies of that period.<sup>39</sup>

Let us now return to the dramaturgy of the Rhetoricians themselves, who operated in the context of these varied traditions, and who could hardly avoid influence from them, as well as contributing much of their own. Such was their expertise and reputation that, as we have discussed above, it became the practice to call upon them to help with processions and other civic ceremonials. They no doubt fitted in well with social aspirations because they were indeed at the heart of urban life. Their membership shows a wide range of occupations and a broad social mix.<sup>40</sup> Often the Prince of a Chamber was a patrician or aristocrat, but the membership might be expected to have a bourgeois outlook. Their activities encompassed not only the presentation of plays: they had wide cultural ambitions, including music and poetry.<sup>41</sup>

Such was their technical interest in poetry that often in the plays the word games and subtleties of expression bear the marks of writers and performers interested in the complexities of language, and especially prosody. In all this there

<sup>38</sup> There are four *abele spelen*, each accompanied by a farce, as well as two independent farces, in the sole surviving source for these texts, the *Van Hulthem-manuscript*, Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 15.589–623. The word 'abel' has generated much scholarly debate but can best be understood as 'ingenious' or witty. See also H. Pleij, 'The Rise of Urban Literature in the Low Countries', in *Medieval Dutch Literature in its European Context*, ed. by E. Kooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 62–77 (pp. 67–68); for secular drama, see T. Decker, 'Medieval Theatre in the Lowlands: Secular Drama', *Dutch Crossing*, 32 (1987), 37–55.

<sup>39</sup> See for humanist drama and religious controversies, James A. Parente, Jr, *Religious Drama and the Humanist Tradition: Christian Theater in Germany and in the Netherlands, 1500–1600* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), pp. 80–85.

<sup>40</sup> See the chart in Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, p. 40.

<sup>41</sup> One particular poetic form is associated with the Rhetoricians, that of the *refereyn*, which was characterized by great complexity of rhyme and verse forms and could be used for comic, amorous, or serious topics and which was geared towards persuasion.

was no doubt an element of exhibitionism not unrelated to the high priority given to competitions. It seems to have been assumed that they had a role as commentators on religious matters, though many of their activities could be regarded as secular, even carnivalesque.<sup>42</sup>

Thus the Chambers provided an opportunity for laymen, not for the most part from the highest social levels, to play a large public role. In the context of later medieval society, particularly in an urban context, this is no doubt an aspect of some significance. The presence of Lutherans, or even Anabaptists, in some Chambers indicates that there was not necessarily a uniformity of religious outlook.

The *factors*, the official poets, of the Chambers had an important role in the composing and presenting of plays. Ramakers calls them '*dichtmeesters en regisseurs*' (master poets and directors).<sup>43</sup> As they were semi-professional, often in combination with functions such as town clerk or schoolmaster, many of them, for instance Matthijs de Castelein (Oudenaarde), Cornelis Everaert (Bruges), and Lauris Jansz. (Haarlem) built up a considerable body of work over many years. Though their activities were not confined to dramaturgy, they acquired much experience of the drama and they moved in circles where there was an acute and lively perception of dramatic conventions. Among their skills was the management of allegory, which was a staple of theatre in this period even though it had not been primarily developed for a dramatic environment. Ideas and attitudes, whether religious, political, or purely literary, could be made active upon the stage by means of its many conventions and rhetorical techniques. This is especially noticeable in the selection of names for characters which often carried dynamic and pointed meaning. They could, however, also use biblical and classical material in such a way that allegory could be mixed with or added to well-known narrative structures. This is the case of the allegory of the Passion in the two Rhetoricians versions of Ovid's story of Pyramus and Thisbe, considered elsewhere in this volume.

The allegorical method was made more pointed by the use of evil characters called *sinnekens*, who appear in many Rhetoricians plays. They are given allegorical names which, since they usually work as a pair, are often complementary.

<sup>42</sup> On their role as religious commentators, see Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, p. 104. He quotes from the statutes of *Den Boeck* (The Book) of Brussels in 1402, from which it becomes clear that the Chamber was pledged to further 'the most noble art of rhetoric and music' and dedicated itself to 'the honour of God and to the consolation and instruction of the residents of this [...] city', p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren*, p. 1.

Such names represent aspects of the religious, moral, philosophical, and political tenor of the ideas in the plays. Their function is not so much temptation as it is a means of articulating their particular significance, and of showing how their named characteristic — Everlasting Hate or Eternal Pride, for instance — has a dynamic function in the play. To this end they comment frequently on what is going on, and at times we see events through their, often cynical, accounts of them, as in the love play between Mars and Venus. This obliqueness introduces an indirectness which is made more dramatic since it affects the way the audience sees things. It adds an extra dimension to the audience's response to what is being enacted. At times they function as an onstage audience, and even if the texts do not require them to remain visible, their linking speeches at the beginnings and ends of their dialogues often draw attention to their implied presence even though they only observe, without saying anything.

Another significant feature is their scenes apart, in which the action is suspended while they provide a framework or undercurrent for it. They can initiate actions and prompt protagonists, but their fundamental purpose is to embody an idea or moral significance. At the same time they often create a broader dimension for their particular characteristic, a feature which often includes reference to past instances of their evil goals. They share a mischievous purpose, but they do not always agree with one another. Their speech distinguishes them, as do their costumes, and the little hammers which some carried. They may occasionally have had their names on their costumes.<sup>44</sup>

In their way the *sinnekens* also contribute to the vigour of the dialogue. Because of the rhetorical objects which the Rhetoricians set themselves, this includes persuasion and the expression of a large range of emotions. Although there are many passages of intimate and fast-moving dialogue, there is always room for an extensive, structured, and poetic expression of ideas and feelings. Since the plays were performed in a culture which included many other examples of rhetorical skills not in themselves part of a drama, the audience must have been a very discerning one, and there would have been a premium on the manifestation of such rhetorical skills. Undoubtedly the word 'rhetoric' had not yet acquired the somewhat pejorative implication it carries today. It is significant that the highest prizes at the competitions went to the playwrights, and the writing of plays, as opposed to performing or writing poetry, was regarded as the summit of achievement. Much of this was embodied in Matthijs de Castelein's

<sup>44</sup> W. Hüskens, 'Between Evil and Temptation: Sinnekens in Rhetoricians' Drama from 's-Gravenpolder', *Dutch Crossing*, 20 (1996), 128–47.

treatise, *De const van rhetoriken*, which was written in 1548 and published posthumously in 1553. *Eneas en Dido* (1551), a play in two parts by Cornelis van Ghistele, factor of *De Goutbloem* in Antwerp, is especially interesting since it contains a justification of dramatic form by two Expositors.<sup>45</sup>

It follows from this that much of the business of the performance in Rhetoricians plays involved dialogue and extended monologue. There is room for practical realism, as in their references to contemporary abuses, or a more general satire on human themes, as in the sex comedy which underlines the goddesses' gossip in *Mars en Venus*. Such general satire also shades into moral instruction, which may be presented to the audience by the protagonists, or by the games and disputes of the *sinnekens*. Often their satirical bravura is sustained over many lines as in the complex word games over the meaning of the word 'carriers' in the *Becooringe*.<sup>46</sup>

Two aspects of staging ought to be mentioned here, since they both affect significantly the ways in which Rhetoricians plays were performed. Hummelen's discussion indicates a growing and developing skill in the exploitation of what he calls the 'stage façade'. The illustrations for the publication of the 1539 Gent plays and for the 1561 Antwerp *Landjuweel* suggest that the stage was divided into a series of compartments, which stood side by side and faced the audience, there being an acting area running across in front of them. The compartments could have curtains across each of them and these might be used to reveal or hide their interiors. Such curtained spaces could be identified with individual scenes in the plays, and they and the actors in them could be quickly brought into the action, or indeed removed from it, simply by pulling the curtains. The spaces behind the curtains could also be used for waiting by actors not active at any given point. Often there was also an upper compartment which could be used for elevated locations such as heaven, or as a platform to look down upon the actions below. The key point about this stage layout is that it allowed rapid changes in the action, and the attention of the audience could be redirected as different places became important. Moreover, as the illustrations show only a limited number of such curtained spaces, it would have been possible to alter the designation and the occupants of any of them as required by the action.

The pictures and the *tooch* (still life) functioned rather similarly. They could be introduced as the action proceeded and operate as a commentary, revelation,

<sup>45</sup> Elsa Strietman, 'Van *Eneas en Dido*: Two Amorous Plays Performed in Antwerp 1552', *European Medieval Drama*, 4 (2000), 109–25 (p. 121).

<sup>46</sup> Jan Tomisz., *Van die becooringe des duvels hoe hij crijstus becoorden*, ed. and trans. by H. Van Iperen and others (Amsterdam: Stichting Neerlandistiek VU, 1998), lines 259–304.



or summary at critical moments in the action. This occurs with the tableau showing Death prepared to throw a spear at the embracing lovers in *sMenschen Sin ende Verganckelijcke Schoonheit* (*Man's Desire and Fleeting Beauty*), while the message of the play is also written upon a board.<sup>47</sup>

It appears that for some performances a series of pictures were used, as in the Brussels contribution at Gent in 1539, which had eight painted scenes illustrating the true means of finding peace.<sup>48</sup> Such a facility fits in especially well with the allegorical mode discussed above, and it would have made possible a focus on the religious and moral dimension of the plays.

In all probability these features were widespread and it is likely that the *factors* would have composed the plays specifically for such configurations. These practices argue for a sophisticated use of the stage space and its emblematic versatility. Hummelen points out that they allowed for, and required, precise timing in the way they were used. He also shows in his discussion of the staging of *Narcissus ende Echo* (c. 1474–85) that they could be used to accommodate a very complex plot.<sup>49</sup>

### *The Present Collection*

In most of the essays collected here the range and competence of Rhetoricians drama is an ever-present feature. The studies bring out its success and they help to illuminate the important part they played in urban culture. The chronological scope is extensive, and includes material which precedes the development of the Rhetoricians drama. For instance *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* (Dauven-van Knippenberg) originates in the fourteenth century. Similarly the *abele spelen*, including *Tspel vanden Winter ende vanden Somer* and *Esmoreit*, from the last quarter of the fourteenth century, and the *Bliscapen*, whose first known performances were organized by an Archers Guild, were not initiated by Rhetoricians.

<sup>47</sup> *Een Esbattement van sMenschen Sin en Verganckelijcke Schoonheit / Man's Desire and Fleeting Beauty*, ed. and trans. by Elsa Strietman and Robert Potter (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1994), line 821.

<sup>48</sup> Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, p. 151.

<sup>49</sup> See *Een theatergeschiedenis der Nederlanden*, ed. by Erenstein and others, pp. 98–105 (p. 102), where the Gent and Antwerp stage façades are illustrated as figs. A (p. 99) and C (p. 101); and W. M. H. Hummelen, 'The Stage Façade Reflected in *Narcissus ende Echo* of Colijn Cailleu (d. 1503)', in *European Theatre, 1470–1600: Traditions and Transformations*, ed. by Martin Gosman and Rina Walthaus (Groningen: Forsten, 1996), pp. 131–39 (p. 138).

The detailed discussion of the property and customs of the Chambers (Van der Heijden and Van Boheemen) goes on well into the seventeenth century.

Although the individual essays will not necessarily fit into rigid categories, and the separate contributions will be found to interact or overlap in many ways, we have arranged the essays around five headings.

## I. Precursors

The contribution by Dauven-van Knippenberg is concerned with the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*, a significant forerunner of the cycle of plays on the *Bliscapen* (Joys of Mary), which were written in the fifteenth century and performed until the middle of the sixteenth century. The *Passiespel* comes from the very edge of the Low Countries, and indeed it is rare and valuable because it is written in the Ripuarian dialect, and culturally its provenance is Cologne. Moreover, as Dauven-van Knippenberg shows, the manuscript is problematic, not only in linguistic terms but also because this particular form of play text was possibly meant as devotional reading, and the connection with an actual performance is hard to establish. Nevertheless, it anticipates later cycle plays in that it is concerned with God's intervention in human history, and it embodies a widespread characteristic of medieval drama in its sense of the immanence of the divine presence.

Hummelen's study of the *pausa* and the *silete* in the *Bliscapen* follows naturally, but its emphasis is more closely linked with the palpable problems of performance, and these are technical terms which invite explanation. These features are shared with large-scale drama from neighbouring traditions, particularly the *mystères* and the German *Passionsspiele*. It is likely that there was a strong musical connection here, and this essay brings into question the need to establish a balanced view of how far the extensive information we have about music in cycle plays should affect our understanding of the dramatic experience they stimulated. There is no doubt that the Dutch *Bliscapen* were part of urban dramatic culture for more than a century, and Hummelen discusses the extent to which the Rhetoricians contributed to them. There seems little doubt that this was a growing commitment in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

## II. Politics and Religion

These two essays address significant aspects of the religious context and the conflict it contained. They are both directly concerned with the impact of ideas

engendered at the Reformation and their effect on traditional belief. Both Waite and Hüsken are interested in the political and religious issues which Rhetoricians might have encountered, or about which they felt passionate or took a stance. Their contributions contain careful analysis of a number of individual plays to show how they managed meaning and how this might reflect features of the contemporary public concerns. They both deeply engage with the impact of Protestant ideology on the Rhetoricians. Waite concentrates upon the dissemination of ideas in the first half of the sixteenth century, and he is actively concerned with the fascinating issue of the way in which controversy was stimulated or avoided by those concerned with creating and performing plays. The special characteristics of dramatic form are clearly an issue here as they seem to have been deeply involved in the exchange of ideas, often by means of concealment or in the light of the necessity to avoid confrontation.

The question of heresy addressed by Hüsken matches the obliqueness and indirectness just noted. He investigates the vocabulary of heresy and the different meanings which might have been attributed to it in differing situations. Once again the changing nature of political struggle throughout the sixteenth century is a significant issue. So too is the manner in which the notion of 'heresy', itself a very slippery term, is manipulated in different situations by dramatists.

### III. Literary Traditions of Rhetoricians Plays

In this period of intense religious and political controversy there was also a confluence of a variety of literary traditions. Principally we can identify medieval and Renaissance aspects, the latter being substantially concerned with classical precedents. The medieval element is addressed by Ramakers. In his essay we return to allegory as presented in the *spelen van sinne*. His contribution reminds us that allegory is a rhetorical device and its use by the Rhetoricians is entirely within their field of interest. Allegory is after all partly a matter of ingenuity in the use of language, and though it acts as an interpretative strategy, it is also a means by which the poets could demonstrate their excellence in a competitive context. Ramakers addresses the importance of argument in the moralities as well and to the semiotics of performance. A great deal depended on the verbal texture of the plays and how this was adjusted to argument.

The essays by Happé and Strietman are both concerned with the ways the classical inheritance was adapted to contemporary issues. Happé discusses the development in dramatic forms of Ovid's version of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe by two Rhetoricians dramatists and Shakespeare, who is roughly their

contemporary. The comparison between them addresses theatrical methods, but this cannot be divorced entirely from their interpretative strategies. The Rhetoricians versions are both concerned with an allegorical dimension, which is used to derive Christian meanings from Ovid's basic narrative. Consideration of the three versions shows that the skilled versatility of Ovid's poetic language might have had a significant appeal for the Rhetoricians. Strietman's paper also discusses the appropriation of classical material by the Rhetoricians. In their treatment of this material the well-known stories become moral exempla and a strong emphasis is given to their political resonance, particularly in the reign of Charles V.

#### IV. Urban Dramatic Culture

In this section there are two main threads. One is that all three essays deal with urban centres of some magnitude, which had considerable resources available for the productions of plays. The second is that the studies by Knight and Muir are strong reminders that we should not be concerned only with drama in Dutch, an aspect also reflected in Dauven-van Knippenberg's essay in the first section.

Knight's work is a part of his comprehensive studies and his edition of the Lille cycle of plays which was long lived, elaborate, and of very considerable importance as an example of drama produced by and for a medieval city. In this essay he addresses the organization and structure of the plays, his conclusions being based on archival material. The Lille plays were closely linked to guild structures, as in many European cities, but the material here is valuable because it provides specific detail about such a commitment. In many other places it is often difficult to be precise about exactly how and whether the guilds were involved. A further significant feature is the variety of drama involved, in terms of content and performance.

Muir is also concerned with a range of drama, but her work covers a number of cities from the predominantly French orientated part of the Low Countries. Like the material from Lille, the drama from Mons is concerned with dramatic production on a very large scale, and requiring a heavy commitment of resources. Her work takes in the exceptionally important records of the *Regisseur* which provide us with information about the urban context and about performance. Even though the actual play texts from this area are hard to come by, she makes it clear that there was very considerable dramatic activity in the towns and cities of the region. This is not an area which has in the past received sufficient attention, especially in the context of the Burgundian and Habsburg Netherlands.

There is evidence not only on the stage but also in processions of the variety of dramatic activities of Rhetoricians and other urban groups. Twycross analyses in detail one of the important processional events in the Low Countries, the Leuven *Ommegang*. Using iconographic material she analyses the presentation of female types with strong emphasis on the emotional nature of religion at that time and its potential effect on the spectators.

## **V. Performance and Material Culture**

The material in this section has a historical aspect, but it also reflects practical details of the Rhetoricians Chambers and some experience of performance in modern times.

In their study of Chambers in the Northern province of Holland, Van der Heijden and Van Boheemen have drawn upon new material from an area which has so far received less attention than the southern provinces. The details they provide give a very lively sense of a number of quite mundane matters, such as the Chambers' possessions and furnishings. Yet such details are full of interest if we are to have an insight into their activities. This essay, together with other published works by these contributors, is directed towards an overall view of the sociology of the Rhetoricians. Noticeably, some of their material is quite late in the period covered by this volume.

Kramer's contribution is also rich in material detail. As an actor, director, and set and costume designer she has worked on many aspects of the production of early Dutch plays, some of which have come from the Rhetoricians. Her productions have challenged the possibly conflicting impulses towards historical recreation and modernization. Witnessing her performances has proved to be an enlivening experience and one which often has stimulated debate.

## **Editors' Note**

The papers by C. Dauven-van Knippenberg, W. M. H. Hummelen, F. C. van Boheemen and Th. J. C. van der Heijden, and Femke Kramer were translated from the Dutch by Elsa Strietman.

## Timeline

- 1270 *Procession of Lille founded by Margaret of Flanders*
- 1288 War of Limburg Succession
- by 1300 Maastricht Passion Play
- c. 1400 *Van Hulthem-manuscript copied containing Esmoreit, and Tspel vanden Winter ende vanden Somer*
- 1402 *First reference to dramatic elements in Lille Procession*
- 1430 Burgundian court moves to Brussels
- 1448 *First confirmed performance of one of the Bliscapen*
- 1458 Royal entry of Philip the Good into Gent
- c. 1475 Elckerlijc (Everyman)
- 1477 Death of Charles the Bold, last Duke of Burgundy
- 1482 Death of Mary of Burgundy, Charles's daughter and heir; her husband Maximilian of Austria becomes regent for their son Philip
- 1494 Maximilian of Austria elected Holy Roman Emperor; his son Archduke Philip rules the Netherlands
- 1500 Birth of Charles (V) at Gent
- c. 1500 *Jan Smeecken, town poet of Brussels, writes Hue Mars en Venus tsaemen bueleerden*
- 1501 *Book of the Mons Passion (Earliest reference 1433)*
- 1506 Death of Philip the Fair leaves Prince Charles heir to the Habsburg Netherlands
- 1515 Charles succeeds as Lord of the Habsburg Netherlands
- 1516 Charles becomes King of Spain
- c. 1518 *Piramus en Thisbe copied for the Haarlem Chamber Trou Moet Blijcken*
- 1519 Charles V becomes Holy Roman Emperor
- c. 1520 *Antwerp Pyramus en Thisbe printed*
- 1522 Inquisition set up by Charles V and the pope
- 1523 First Dutch Lutherans burned at Brussels
- 1531 Joyous Entry of Charles V into Gent
- 1534 *Expansion of Passion scenes at Lille*  
*Cornelis Everaert, Tspel van den Wyngaert at Bruges*
- 1534 Fall of Anabaptist stronghold at Münster
- 1539 *Landjuweel at Gent: nineteen plays performed and printed (1540)*
- 1540 Charles enters Gent and annuls its liberties
- c. 1540 *Minnevader voor de Lieve Heer composed in Amsterdam*

- Clodius Presbiter*, Een vastenspel van sinnen hue sMenschen Gheest van tVleesch, die Werlt en die Duvel verleyt wordt
- 1543 Charles now rules the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands  
*J. Valcke*, De Duerlijdende Man
- 1544 Peace of Crépy between France and Spain, followed by purge of heretics in the Netherlands  
William of Nassau (aged 11) becomes Prince of Orange with lands in Brabant, Luxemburg, Holland, and Burgundy  
Een spel van zinnen vander Moedere ende kindren Zebedei *performed*
- 1546 Inquisition strengthened
- 1547 *Twenty-Five Day* Passion de Valenciennes
- 1549 Philip of Spain (crown prince) tours the Netherlands and visits Brussels  
Pragmatic Sanction of Charles V to ensure unity of seventeen provinces  
Fourth Bliscap *performed at Brussels*
- 1551 Frans Fraet begins printing, including Lutheran books, in Antwerp  
*J. van den Berghe*, De Wellustige Mensch *performed at Antwerp*  
*J. Awijts*, Een meijspel van sinnen van Menschelijcke Broosheit *performed in Amsterdam*  
*Cornelis van Ghistele*, Eneas en Dido *performed at Antwerp*
- 1553 Resistance to Inquisition in Holland and other provinces
- 1555 Charles V abdicates; Philip II ruler of the Netherlands
- 1556 Iconoclasm in Gent, Antwerp, and elsewhere
- 1559 Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis between Spain and France  
Philip II leaves the Netherlands. Margaret of Parma regent  
Seventh Bliscap *performed at Brussels*
- 1561 *Antwerp* Landjuweel
- 1562 Massacre of Vassy; spread of Calvinists in southern Netherlands;  
Calvinist services in public; riots over execution of Protestants
- 1564 Fall of Cardinal Granvelle
- 1565 Egremont secured easing of heresy laws, but these reasserted by Philip and Duke of Alba
- 1566 Compromise of Nobles secures concessions from Margaret of Parma but these are rejected by Philip
- 1566–67 First Dutch revolt
- 1567 Duke of Alba appointed captain general, with Spanish troops in Netherlands
- 1568 Battle of Heiligerlee; William of Orange's brothers defeated by Spanish Forces; further repression of insurgents

- 1569–76 Second Dutch revolt
- 1573 Siege of Protestant Haarlem; defeat of Alva
- 1576 Spanish troops storm Antwerp (Spanish Fury)  
Pacification of Gent secures alliance between States-General and William of Orange and the rebels
- 1576–81 Third Dutch revolt
- 1577 Perpetual Edict recognizing authority of William of Orange in Brussels  
Philip's truce with Turks allows him to increase pressure against States-General
- 1578 Split between Catholics and Calvinists deepens  
Duke of Parma leads Spanish forces
- 1579 Union of Arras combines southern provinces  
Protestant Union of Utrecht combines rebel provinces
- 1581 Act of Abjuration rejects Philip's authority  
Six southern provinces remain loyal to Philip
- 1582 Duke of Anjou sworn in as leader  
Return of Spanish army under Parma
- 1583 *Lauris Jansz. adapts Minnevader voor de Lieve Heer for Haarlem*
- 1584 Murder of William of Orange  
English intervention in support of States-General
- 1585 Fall of Antwerp
- 1588 After failure of the Armada Philip makes concessions to States-General
- 1590 Parma diverted by Philip to French wars
- 1591 Maurice of Nassau begins reconquest of Dutch towns
- 1592 Duke of Anjou sworn in as leader of some dissident provinces
- 1593 *Ommegang at Leuven*
- 1594 Liberation of Groningen
- 1596 Archduke sent to reassert Spanish authority  
*Victories of Maurice celebrated by tableau at Leiden*
- 1598 Philip II dies; Philip III succeeds
- c. 1600 Trou Moet Blijcken, *collection of plays compiled for the Haarlem Chamber De Pellicanisten*
- 1602 Spinola wins some territory for Spain
- 1606 *Drama competition at Haarlem*
- 1609 Twelve-Year Truce of Antwerp secures Dutch temporary peace
- 1621 End of Twelve-Year Truce
- 1648 Peace of Münster ends Eighty-Years War and secures independence for the Republic







## BORDERLINE TEXTS: THE CASE OF THE *MAASTRICHT (RIPUARIAN) PASSION PLAY*

Carla Dauven-van Knippenberg

The text that survives on folios 233<sup>v</sup>–247<sup>v</sup> of manuscript 70 E 5 of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB) in The Hague has produced very diverse critical responses.<sup>1</sup> The *Verfasserlexikon* and other standard works label it *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*.<sup>2</sup> This contrasts with the designation in the first edition by Julius Zacher in volume 2 of the *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* in 1842, where he refers to it as an Easter Play which he regards as ‘the oldest surviving example of drama from the Netherlands’.<sup>3</sup> In 1873 Wilhelm Braune asserted that the work is ‘neither from the Netherlands nor from Maastricht, but shows distinctive dialect features of the Cologne-Lower Rhine area’, and two years later in 1875 a new edition was produced by the medieval Dutch specialist

<sup>1</sup> At this point I would like to record my thanks to John Tailby of the University of Leeds for his assistance with the English version of this essay. This essay is closely related to my ‘Texte auf der Grenze: Zum “Maastrichter (ripuarischen) Passionsspiel”’, in *Schnittpunkte: Deutsch-Niederländische Literaturbeziehungen im späten Mittelalter*, ed. by Angelika Lehmann-Benz, Ulrike Zellmann, and Urban Küsters (Münster: Waxman, 2003), pp. 95–107. See also my ‘Duitstalig geestelijk toneel van de Middeleeuwen’, in *Spel en spektakel: Middeleeuws toneel in de Lage Landen*, ed. by Hans van Dijk and Bart Ramakers (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2001), pp. 58–76 and 326–34; on the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*, see pp. 69–76.

<sup>2</sup> *Lexikon des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, ed. by Kurt Ruh and others (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), v, cols 1107–08; Rolf Bergmann, *Katalog der deutschsprachigen geistlichen Spiele und Marienklage des Mittelalters* (Munich: Beck’schen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1986), no. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Julius Zacher, ‘Mittelniederländisches Osterspiel’, *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, 2 (1842), 302–50.

Moltzer, who also labelled it as Lower Rhenish.<sup>4</sup> A reason for the relative neglect of the play in the intervening century may well be found in the way that the two early editors each, almost paradoxically, attributed the text to the literature of the other's country.<sup>5</sup> The only study devoted to the text, the unpublished Marburg dissertation by Philipp Hamacher, likewise fails to deliver a linguistic evaluation which advances the discussion: '[its language is] not of a kind which would be exclusively appropriate to the Netherlands: [a Dutchman] would take especial care to avoid those specifically Ripuarian word forms. One only needs to compare the language of Veldeke with that of our Passion Play to recognize that even a Limburger like Veldeke as a close neighbour of Ripuarian would have found the performance of this play alien.'<sup>6</sup>

Hamacher's localization of the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* in the Ripuarian dialect area was confirmed in 1972 by Rolf Bergmann.<sup>7</sup> This confirmation of the Western Ripuarian localization, narrowed down specifically to the area around Aachen, most probably also guarantees that the smatterings of Middle Dutch, which characterize the text, would have been understood. The situation here is, however, clearly different from that regarding the works of Veldeke: instead of international rivalry in laying claim to them, here in the case of edifying literature there is only intermittent lukewarm interest. Although Hartmut Beckers had characterized our text as one of the most important works of religious literature in verse of the period, from the area of the rivers Rhine and Maas,<sup>8</sup> as recently as 1996 it was excluded from Dutch national literature.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Braune, 'Untersuchungen über Heinrich von Veldeke', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 4 (1873), 249–304 (p. 251). *De middlnederlandsche dramatische poezie*, ed. by Henri Ernest Moltzer (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1875), pp. 496–538.

<sup>5</sup> I am currently preparing a new edition with Arend Quak.

<sup>6</sup> This is a close rendering of Philipp Hamacher's wording in 'Untersuchungen zum Maastrichter Passionsspiel' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cologne, 1922), p. 49. There is a further unpublished dissertation on the play in the field of Dutch studies: Gerrit Wessels, 'Het Maastrichts Passiespel: Een theologische en letterkundige verkenning en bepaling van een religieus drama in de middeleeuwen' (University of Nijmegen/Heerlen, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Hamacher, 'Untersuchungen', p. 99; Rolf Bergmann, *Studien zur Entstehung und Geschichte der deutschen Passionsspiele des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1972), p. 55.

<sup>8</sup> Hartmut Beckers, 'Die mittelfränkischen Rheinlande als literarische Landschaft', in *Literatur und Sprache im rheinisch-maasländischen Raum zwischen 1150 und 1450*, special issue, *Zeitschrift für deutschen Philologie*, 108 (1989), 19–49 (p. 49).

<sup>9</sup> Wim Hüskens, '1391–1392: In Dendermonde wordt tijdens de Paasdagen een Verrijzenis-spel gespeeld. Kerkelijk drama in de volkstaal', in *Een theatergeschiedenis der Nederlanden: Tien*

The old-fashioned approach to literary studies, which seeks to interpret medieval texts according to the parameters of present-day political boundaries, leads to wrong judgements and scholarly disagreements. The more recent tendency, to reveal older cultural entities which cross modern political boundaries, offers a new chance for the examination of texts such as the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*. The starting point for this essay is the idea that such a re-evaluation of the interpretation of the text must begin with an examination of the hitherto neglected context in which the work has survived, starting from Gumbert's palaeographical work on the manuscript.<sup>10</sup> We will then look at the historical context, the contemporary political context, and the implications of contemporary religiosity, followed by an examination of the purpose for which the manuscript was intended. Even if these questions cannot all be answered adequately in the present context, we aim to take the first step by removing previous misleading discrepancies and making the way clear for a more adequate analysis of the content.

*The Manuscript: The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 70 E 5*

The manuscript codex which includes the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* is generally known as the *Limburgse Sermoenen* (Limburg Sermons) because the bulk of its contents consists of sermons. The manuscript comprises 248 parchment folios, and each page of text is written in two columns with thirty-one lines per column.<sup>11</sup> It contains the *Limburgse Sermoenen*, a Middle Dutch translation of thirty-two sermons from the collection known as *St Georgen Prediger* (St

*eeuwen drama en theater in Nederland en Vlaanderen*, ed. by Rob Erenstein and others (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), pp. 24–29 (p. 25): 'Although a *Maastrichts Paaspel* [i.e. the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*] has survived from the fourteenth century, its text originates in the area round Aachen and belongs, linguistically, more to the German (Ripuarian) area than to that of the Low Countries.'

<sup>10</sup> J. Peter Gumbert, 'De datering van het Haagse Handschrift van de *Limburgse Sermoenen*', in *Miscellanea Neerlandica: Opstellen voor dr. Jan Deschamps ter gelegenheid van zijn zeventigste verjaardag*, ed. by E. Cockx-Indestege and F. Hendrickx (Leuven: Peeters, 1987), pt. 1, pp. 167–81.

<sup>11</sup> Description based on Jan Deschamps's recording: *CD-ROM Middelnederlands: Woordenboek en Teksten* (Leiden: Instituut voor Nederlandse Lexicologie, 1998), no. 846. The CD-ROM also contains the complete text of the *Limburgse Sermoenen* (Limburg Sermons) in *De Limburgsche Sermoenen*, ed. by J. H. Kern, Bibliotheek van Middelnederlandsche Letterkunde, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53 (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1895).

Georgen Sermons), sixteen other sermons, and mystic tracts as well as the text in dialogue form which is the topic of this essay.

The manuscript is not quite complete. The last sermon breaks off in mid-sentence on folio 232<sup>v</sup>. The first of a new gathering, folio 233<sup>r</sup>, is empty and the text of the *Passion Play* begins on folio 233<sup>v</sup>; furthermore, the conclusion of the play and several folios within the main part are missing.

In 1989 the Leiden palaeographer J. P. Gumbert published in the *Festschrift* celebrating the seventieth birthday of his famous colleague Jan Deschamps the results of his work on this Hague manuscript. Apart from the marginalia he identified three hands, of which the first wrote the sermons, the second the rubricated titles of the sermons, and the third the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*.<sup>12</sup> The designations of the speakers in this text are likewise rubricated. Both the sermons and the dramatic text begin with an elaborate capital letter. Gumbert labels the hand of the sermons as one of the most beautiful and striking he has encountered and he considers the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* well written, the work of an experienced scribe.<sup>13</sup>

Gumbert's analysis of the handwriting led to a new dating of the manuscript, which is now generally accepted. He believes the sermons and tracts were written just before or around 1300, the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* a little later. He bases this latter assertion on the shape of the letter /e/, which almost uniformly has a final short 'tongue' out to the right, as opposed to the later tradition, still valid today, which has the top of the /e/ completed with a stroke turned inward.<sup>14</sup> The older form does not occur in this area after about 1330, and he therefore concludes that the play was written down early in the fourteenth century, and not around 1390.

Gumbert's new dating brings the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* forward to the earliest date ever previously suggested. Rolf Bergmann in his study of the beginnings of the German vernacular Passion Plays discussed the timescale in terms of the then available information and concluded: 'they cover the period from the first half of the fourteenth century, through the middle and later parts of that century, the period around 1400 and the early fifteenth century.'<sup>15</sup> With-

<sup>12</sup> Contrary to Gumbert's usage of Easter Play, I follow the terminology of the *Verfasserlexikon*.

<sup>13</sup> Gumbert, 'De datering', p. 174.

<sup>14</sup> The facsimile of the opening lines of the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* on p. 176 shows this shape of the /e/ clearly.

<sup>15</sup> Bergmann, *Studien*, pp. 52–53, with bibliographical references on the datings.

out making a more precise assessment Bergmann assumes on the basis of the arrangement of the manuscript that it was written in the fourteenth century and bases his further considerations of the beginnings of the genre on this imprecise assumption. Gumbert's early dating on palaeographical grounds reinforces the seminal significance of this text for the genre.

He also established that folios 233–36 have the same perforations as the sermon sections, thus disproving the earlier hypothesis that the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* was added to the manuscript at a later date. He emphasizes the significance of this observation for the future study of the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*, since — following Deschamps's findings — it had hitherto been assumed that the copying of the play text had occurred quite separately from that of the sermons. This would now need to be revised.<sup>16</sup> Bergmann followed a similar line of argument, saying that due to the lack of a codicological connection there could be no link between the origin of the sermons and that of the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*.<sup>17</sup> This non-committal attitude is no longer valid thanks to Gumbert's findings. An adequate interpretation and assessment of the play text can only be reached in the manuscript context alongside the *Limburgse Sermoenen*.

### *The Context of Transmission*

The *Limburgse Sermoenen* are closely related to the *St Georgen Sermons*, a collection which is generally acknowledged to be of Cistercian origin.<sup>18</sup> The material concentrates on Christ and Mary, with emphasis on the Passion. Their popularity, evinced by the multiplicity of manuscripts, is based on 'multiple possible uses for the texts, thanks to their intermediate position between catechism, meditation and mystical love in the Bernardine tradition'.<sup>19</sup> It confirms Volker Mertens's observation that from the beginning German sermon manuscripts were multifunctional;<sup>20</sup> for example, the oldest manuscript of the *St Georgen*

<sup>16</sup> Gumbert, 'De datering', p. 169 and n. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Bergmann, *Studien*, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> The general information is taken from Wolfgang Frühwald, 'St. Georgener Prediger', in *Verfasserlexikon*, II, cols 1205–13.

<sup>19</sup> *Verfasserlexikon*, II, col. 1209.

<sup>20</sup> Volker Mertens, 'Texte unterwegs: zu Funktions- und Textdynamik mittelalterlicher Predigten und den Konsequenzen für ihre Edition', in *Mittelalterforschung und Edition*, ed. by

*Sermons* advises the user of either sex ‘du solt dich selben leren und predigen’ (you should teach and preach [to] yourself).<sup>21</sup> Mertens interprets this in the sense that the manuscript was used ‘apparently for individual or collective reading or meditation’.<sup>22</sup>

If the datings are correct, it means that the *St Georgen Sermons* were translated into Limburg dialect very shortly after the date of this oldest surviving manuscript.<sup>23</sup> This is, on the one hand, an indication of the popularity of the text, but on the other hand, it demonstrates that in the Maasland area at that time the ability existed to put a currently popular work to good use, as is shown by the excellent style of the prose translations, the quality of the scribe, and the production of such an elegant manuscript.

Yet it is not only the translation of the thirty-two *St Georgen Sermons* which characterizes the manuscript but also the sixteen other tracts and sermons, two of which demonstrably point to the edifying mystical literature of Brabant: Sermon XLI, folios 183<sup>r</sup>–190<sup>v</sup>, constitutes the tenth Letter of Hadewijch;<sup>24</sup> Sermon XLII, folios 190<sup>v</sup>–197<sup>r</sup>, contains the *Seven manieren van minnen* (*Seven Kinds of Loving*) by Beatrijs of Nazareth.<sup>25</sup> These two women, who were active in the

Danielle Buschinger (Amiens: Centre d’Etudes Médiévales, Université de Picardie, 1991) pp. 75–85 (p. 76).

<sup>21</sup> Karlsruhe, Baden Staatsbibliothek, MS St Georgen germ. 36, c. 1300; *Der sogenannte St Georgener Prediger aus der Freiburger und Karlsruher Handschrift*, ed. by Karl Rieder, *Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters*, 10 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1908), p. 241.

<sup>22</sup> Mertens, ‘Texte unterwegs’, p. 81.

<sup>23</sup> Linguistic analysis has shown that our manuscript, The Hague, KB, MS 70 E 5, must have been produced in the border area between the Maasland and Brabant dialects. See Wilhelmus Raeven, ‘Zur Bezeichnung für die Handschrift 70 E 5 der Königlichen Bibliothek im Haag’, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik*, 14 (1979), 149–74 (p. 162).

<sup>24</sup> The tenth letter transmitted with the *Limburgse Sermoenen* is a version of the commentary on the Song of Solomon by (pseudo-)Richard of St Victor. For the most recent consideration of Hadewijch’s authorship of this translation, see Wybren Scheepsma, ‘Hadewijch und die *Limburgse Sermoenen*: Überlegungen zu Datierung, Identität und Authentizität’, in *Deutsche Mystik im abendländischen Zusammenhang: Neu erschlossene Texte, neue methodische Ansätze, neue theoretische Konzepte. Kolloquium Kloster Fischingen 1998*, ed. by Walter Haug and Wolfram Schneider-Lastin (Tübingen: Miemeyer, 2000), pp. 653–82.

<sup>25</sup> The presence of these two mystical texts by women in The Hague, KB, MS 70 E 5 becomes even more significant in the light of Gumbert’s early dating, since it makes this the earliest surviving example. At the same time, however, the hypothesis that Hadewijch’s letters are the basis of several sermons is under debate once more. See Scheepsma, ‘Hadewijch’, pp. 653–82.



thirteenth century, occupy an important role in Dutch literary history, as they mark the beginnings of both mystical and prose writings.<sup>26</sup> Their works demonstrate a background in the spirituality of Cistercian thinking: meditation on the Life and Passion of Christ, the soul's Bridegroom. From Beatrijs only the tract on love survives; from Hadewijch we have thirty-one letters, fourteen visions, and forty-five stanzas of mystical poetry in the style of love poetry (*Minnelyrik*).

The context for which the *Limburgse Sermoenen* were produced is not clear. The *St Georgen Sermons* were intended for nuns, but the translated version in the *Limburgse Sermoenen* seems to have been intended for monks. One reason for this supposition is an entry in the index of The Hague manuscript relating to Sermon XL which reads: 'Mi lest in Apocalipsi. Det sin de twelf vrogte, ende es een orberlic sermoen als de brudere onsen Here suln ontfaen, ende es lanc' (One reads in the Apocalypse. Those are the twelve joys, and is a useful sermon whenever the brothers receive [the body of] our Lord, and is long). Also, as J. H. Kern, the editor of the *Limburgse Sermoenen*, points out, on occasion the form of address *jungfrow* (Sister) has been replaced by *mensce* (person), which suggests reworking for male recipients. Kern refers here specifically to a passage on folio 43<sup>b</sup>, from Sermon X, 'Dit Compt Regte Alre Heiligen Dage' (this is suitable for All Hallows). In Rieder's edition of the *St Georgen Sermons*, this is Sermon 51 and is entitled 'Von der hymelschen wirtschaft' (About the heavenly housekeeping); in the Karlsruhe manuscript a second hand has added *von allen hailigen*, which either means 'all saints' or 'All Hallows', depending on whether it refers to all the saints or to the feast day. For ease of comparison I give the two passages below:

| Karlsruhe:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Den Haag:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| . . . und also sol ain jungfrow gút sin, daz ir alle lúte gerent. intrúwen, swelú jungfrowe sich flisset gúter zúhten, . . . , der gerent alle lúte. Edition Rieder, pp. 178/29–179/2<br>[. . . and a virgin should be so good that all people seek her company. Indeed, any virgin who devotes herself to good virtue, . . . she is sought by all people.] | Ende also sal een gut mensce so gut sin dat sins al de lide geren. Entrowen, welc mensce sig vlishet guder togte, . . . , alde lide begeren sins.<br>Edition Kern, pp. 267/32–268/3<br>[And a good person should be so good that all people seek their company. Indeed, any person who devotes him or her to good virtue, . . . , is sought by all people.] |

It is debatable whether the textual emendations indicate alteration for a specific male audience, or whether they were made simply to make the texts usable in a wider context for either sex. Hitherto the provenance of the *Limburgse Sermoenen*

<sup>26</sup> Beatrijs of Nazareth is dated c. 1200–63, Hadewijch around 1250. Scheepsma, however, dates her around 1300.

remains unexplained and any more precise attributions remain hypothetical.<sup>27</sup> For the moment the statement must suffice that the collection bears the hallmark of Cistercian piety. In the case of a thirteenth-century text this does not necessarily mean that it originates directly from the Cistercian order. We can also say that it contains texts more suitable for a male audience as well as others appropriate for women. As regards its literary qualities we should point out that the vernacular religious prose of the sermon collection is a 'product of the powerful lay religious movement of the high Middle Ages'.<sup>28</sup> The first fruits of this movement appeared in Cistercian circles on the Middle and Lower Rhine, where, from an early date, a monastic culture evolved which encouraged vernacular literature as a vehicle for the new piety.<sup>29</sup> A text using dialogue such as the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* might function extremely well in such a highly developed literary context.

### *The Title of the Play*

According to the *Verfasserlexikon* and Bergmann's *Katalog der geistlichen Spiele* our text should be called the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*.<sup>30</sup> The various

<sup>27</sup> This urgent question is being examined currently by Scheepsma of the University of Leiden. Though there are more clues regarding the place where the *Limburgse Sermoenen* was before being moved to the Royal Library in 1840, the evidence is ambiguous. Gumbert, 'De datering', p. 167, still followed older scholarship in citing the Slavantenklooster in Maastricht, the name of which is a popular corruption of Observantenklooster. Raeven however argues in favour of the same city's Maagdendries convent as the manuscript's previous location. One may hope that Scheepsma's work on the literary context of the whole manuscript may cast new light on this point too.

<sup>28</sup> Joachim Heinzle, 'Zur Stellung des Prosa-Lancelot in der deutschen Literatur des 13. Jahrhunderts', in *Artusrittertum im späten Mittelalter*, ed. by Friedrich Wolfzettel (Giessen: Schmitz, 1984), pp. 104–13 (p. 105).

<sup>29</sup> Joachim Heinzle, 'Literatur und historische Wirklichkeit: Zur fachgeschichtlichen Situierung sozialhistorischer Forschungsprogramme in der Altgermanistik', in *Das Mittelalter und die Germanisten: Zur neueren Methodengeschichte der Germanischen Philologie. Freiburger Colloquium 1997*, ed. by Eckart Conrad Lutz (Freiburg: Universitäts Verlag, 1997), pp. 93–114 (p. 112): 'The interest in the non-literary function of literature is shown not only in patronage but in the straightforward missionary use of vernacular writing by the new religious orders in the late Middle Ages.'

<sup>30</sup> Bergmann, *Katalog*, no. 60: see also Bernd Neumann, *Geistliches Schauspiel im Zeugnis der Zeit: Zur Aufführung mittelalterlicher religiöser Dramen im deutschen Sprachgebiet* (Munich: Artemis, 1987), I, 66.

categories of religious plays are known not by the titles used in the manuscripts, which in our eyes are inconsistent and diverse, but according to the system evolved by modern scholarship.<sup>31</sup> As regards our text, its content causes it to be called a Passion Play since it is a version of the story of the Redemption and recognizable by its external features as a play, or at least a text in dialogue form. The manuscript title gives no clue as to the genre, but it is, as many others in the volume, a brief summary of the content: 'Dit is begin, wie vnse here die werelt zen irsten begonde ze machene ende allet des he begerde, ende sprach dus — Ego sum alfa et o' (this is the beginning, of how Our Lord first began to create the world and all that he intended, and spoke thus — *Ego sum alfa et o*).<sup>32</sup>

In 1842, Zacher's choice of the title *Easter Play* was therefore based neither on the manuscript nor on the content, at least in the terms used by modern German scholarship, which would define an Easter Play as beginning at the Resurrection with the three Marys' visit to the grave (*visitatio sepulchri*) and continuing to the scene of Christ's appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Since the extant version breaks off in the middle of the scene where Judas betrays Christ, we have no absolute certainty that the Easter events were part of this play. It is, however, entirely right to insist on accuracy with regard to this specific play which since its first publication has been referred to in German or Dutch as 'Middle Dutch Easter Play', 'Lower Rhenish Passion Play', 'Maastricht Easter Play', and 'Maastricht Passion Play'.<sup>33</sup> The name 'Maastricht Easter Play' is especially confusing, since this title is also used for a Latin play dating from the turn of the twelfth to the thirteenth century.<sup>34</sup> It is noteworthy that this is the oldest Latin Easter Play attributable to the German church. It encompasses a *visitatio sepulchri*, a *hortulanus* scene, and a *peregrinus* scene on the Road to Emmaus. The beginning of the play is missing, since only two of the original three leaves survive, but it is assumed that a *mercator/unguentarius* scene has been lost. This (Latin) *Maastricht Easter Play* survives in the Gospels from the Church of Our Lady in Maastricht, now The Hague, KB, MS 76 F 3, and it seems likely that the

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Matthias Schulz, *Die Eigenbezeichnungen des mittelalterlichen geistlichen Spiels* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1998).

<sup>32</sup> According to Zacher's edition, p. 303 (see note 3 above).

<sup>33</sup> These inaccurate labels continue to occur even in recent publications about medieval Dutch drama.

<sup>34</sup> For general information on this play, see Hansjürgen Linke, "'Maastrichter Osterspiel" (lat.)', in *Verfasserlexikon*, V, cols. 1105–07. See also Helmut de Boor, *Die Textgeschichte der lateinischen Osterfeiern* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1967), who deals with this play under the heading 'Holländisches Spiel', i.e. 'Dutch Play'.

performance constituted part of the Easter celebrations of this church.<sup>35</sup> Its title is therefore based on both content and place of performance.

This is not the case with the older titles for the dramatic text from KB MS 70 E 5. Its content is more extensive than that of an Easter Play, which is normally confined to scenes following the Resurrection. Our text, however, begins with the Creation of the World and the Angels and breaks off during the Betrayal. By Bergmann's definition a Passion Play is 'not a play concerned with Christ's Passion but one concerned with the Redemption brought about by Christ's Passion'.<sup>36</sup> By these criteria our play is a Passion Play and the designation Easter Play, which goes back to Zacher, can be discounted.

Not only the designation of the play but also the appropriate localization is problematic.<sup>37</sup> 'Maastricht' refers not to the origin of the manuscript or the place of performance of the play but to its last location before it found its way into the Royal Dutch Library in the nineteenth century. This last location may have been the Maagdendries convent in Maastricht. It is unlikely that it originated there, but we have no knowledge of how or when it got there. Nor do we have any references to performances in Maastricht which might relate to it.<sup>38</sup> The only established factor is the Ripuarian language of the text. The title adopted by the *Verfasserlexikon* and by Bergmann in his catalogue, *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*, seems therefore the best solution because it includes this additional information.

### *Historical Context*

Despite the shortage of evidence about the provenance of this text, there are some signs of a specific political orientation. The starting point for these consid-

<sup>35</sup> The parchment sheets on which the play is written served as front cover and first page of a precious lectionary from the Church of Our Lady in Maastricht. A fifteenth-century ordinal from this church mentions the performance of an Easter Play at the end of Matins. See Joseph Smits-van Waesberge, *Muziek en drama in de Middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam: Bigot and Van Rossum, 1955), pp. 63–68 and 86–96. This may well be a reference to the tradition to which the parchment fragment bears witness.

<sup>36</sup> Bergmann, *Studien*, p. 258.

<sup>37</sup> This is a well-known problem which affects all play texts: sometimes the localization refers to the original, sometimes to the present location of the manuscript, and only occasionally to the place of origin or performance.

<sup>38</sup> Bernd Neumann, 'Mittelalterliches Schauspiel am Niederrhein', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 94 (1975), 147–94 (p. 189).

erations are the 'exotic elements, which seem to point to the Netherlands'.<sup>39</sup> These are to be found especially in the scene with Mary Magdalene, depicting her conversion and her previous life, which have been examined both by Arend Quak and by Frank Willaert.<sup>40</sup> Though both concentrate on her song, which begins at line 796 of the text, Quak approaches the text as a historical linguist while Willaert examines the semantics and the metrics. Both attribute the text to the court of Duke Jan I of Brabant. Willaert's formal analysis reveals a *virelai* ballad, and he states that the first author to whom we can attribute such songs is Duke Jan I of Brabant (c. 1254–94). He was not only a minstrel but also a powerful ruler. His attempts to expand his territory brought him into conflict with, amongst others, the Archbishop of Cologne. The song of Mary Magdalene is probably connected with the war of succession, known as the Battle of Woeringen, 1288, which Jan I fought to bring the Limburg lands into his possession.<sup>41</sup> Following Gumbert's early dating of the text Willaert states that Mary Magdalene's song in the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* is the oldest such song in this form, imported from France in the thirteenth century, apart from those by Jan I.<sup>42</sup> Mary's announcement that she intends 'sengen nuwen sanc' (to sing a new song) (line 795) can therefore be taken literally.

In addition, Quak's linguistic analysis compelled him to examine this song as well. After comparing it with the bulk of medieval lyric poetry from the German- and Romance-speaking areas he concludes that the rhyme scheme in Mary's song matches that in only one other poem, namely Duke Jan I's 'Menech creature es blide' (Many creatures are joyful).<sup>43</sup> Quak makes the further observation that the Netherlandish linguistic features in the text are concentrated in the scene portraying Mary's earlier sinful life, from which he rightly deduces that this

<sup>39</sup> This is Hamacher's way of referring to the Middle Dutch fragments.

<sup>40</sup> Arend Quak, 'Zwischen zwei Sprachen: Zum Maastrichter Passionsspiel', in *'Sô wold ich in fröiden singen': Festgabe für Anthonius H. Touber zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Carla Dauven-van Knippenberg and Helmut Birkhan, special issue, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik*, 43–44 (1995), 399–408. In the same volume, Frank Willaert, 'Maria Magdalenas Lied im Maastrichter Passionsspiel', pp. 543–51.

<sup>41</sup> According to Willaert, 'Maria Magdalenas Lied', p. 545: 'a song with a maximum of three stanzas, each consisting of two identical parts (the *Stollen* of the *Aufgesang*) and a contrasting ending (*Abgesang*), which in their metre, rhyme scheme and (here sadly not extant) musical form are identical to those of the refrain'.

<sup>42</sup> Willaert, 'Maria Magdalenas Lied', p. 550.

<sup>43</sup> Quak, 'Zwischen zwei Sprachen', p. 403.

scene represents a criticism of court life from the perspective of the city (i.e. Aachen) and its clergy.<sup>44</sup> The question then arises whether one can go further and relate this criticism to one specific court. The historical events and the political constellations in the area of the Maas and the Rhine at the turn of the thirteenth to the fourteenth century can perhaps provide further insights.

The War of the Limburg Succession ended with the Battle of Woeringen on 5 June 1288. It was caused by the death of Duke Walram IV of Limburg without a male heir in 1279/80. He bequeathed the Duchy to his daughter Irmingardis and her husband Reinald, Count of Guelders;<sup>45</sup> when she died childless in 1282 Reinald considered himself the legitimate heir. There were, however, other claimants who also recognized the strategic significance of Limburg. Two parties developed, the one led by Reinald and supported by the Archbishop of Cologne, and indirectly by Guy van Dampierre, Count of Flanders, who soon became Reinald's father-in-law. On the other side stood Duke Jan I of Brabant, supported by the citizens of Cologne and the Counts of Berg, Julich, and Mark. Reinald lost the battle.

If one attempts to put the Netherlandish elements in the text of the *Maas-tricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* into the contemporary historical context one might tentatively imagine the scene as an allusion to the court of Brabant (or its satellites) from the viewpoint of the Ripuarian clergy, who were supporters of the Counts of Guelders.<sup>46</sup> The author illustrates court life, which in the play represents the sinful lifestyle to be rejected, by means of a popular song. The process is as recognizable today as it was then. Every reader or hearer recognizes the purpose of the interpolated song without any need for a specific allusion to the intended court or scene. However, this device increases in value when the target audience is the insider who knows and recognizes which court is meant.<sup>47</sup> It is tempting to regard the song of Mary Magdalene, which is in Middle Dutch, not in Ripuarian, as pointing a finger at the victorious court of Brabant from the

<sup>44</sup> Quak, 'Zwischen zwei Sprachen', p. 407.

<sup>45</sup> M. K. J. Smeets, 'De slag bij Woeringen 1288 en zijn historische betekenis voor Limburg', in *Uitgegeven bij gelegenheid van de historische expositie 'De slag bij Woeringen 1288 & De Limburgse erfenis. Gouvernement, 15 september – 26 oktober 1988* (Provincie Limburg, 1988). See also W. Herborn, 'Woeringen, Schlacht v.', in *Lexikon des Mittelalters* (Munich: Artemis and Winkler, 1998), IX, col. 337.

<sup>46</sup> The context in which the text survives suggests clerical rather than urban associations.

<sup>47</sup> Even today it is not uncommon for an author to work in allusions to current events and situations, the full detail of which is known only to a small circle of insiders.

perspective of the losers in the battle of Woeringen. These considerations can certainly form the basis for further consideration of the origins of the play, taking account of more than just linguistic factors.

### *Some Thoughts About the Purpose of the Text*

A further noteworthy feature of the scene depicting Mary Magdalene's earlier life is that it can be read as a pastiche of court manners. She describes precisely how one should dress and behave as a 'wonnencliche wijf' (a delightful woman) (line 821). By contrast, her sister Martha 'weis eine ander zale / die mich nit en bevellet wale' (knows another tale, that I do not like at all) (lines 860–61). By this she means the rules by which a pious woman will live. Finally Martha convinces Mary that this other lifestyle is God-fearing and preferable. The words she speaks during this change of heart and the accompanying actions must have made a forceful impression on young women. One has to contemplate the likelihood that the text was intended for a female audience to whom a mirror is being held up to show the process of how one can change one's life from a worldly to a godly orientation.

The play as a whole shows the workings of God's Grace throughout history, beginning with the Creation. All the major episodes are included although there are some lacunae. Despite this vivid portrayal and the use of two colours in the manuscript, the question remains as to whether the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* is truly a play which happens to have found its way into a manuscript codex of devotional texts. This doubt as to its classification is supported not only by the greater weight here attributed to the context in which it survives, but also to several other specific considerations. Two of these will be cited here as examples, so that we can begin to consider this work from another viewpoint, and not just as drama. After all, we have no corresponding records of performance, the manuscript shows no signs of having being used for a performance, and indeed the two-column format makes its use for a performance highly unlikely and suggests that this text has been adapted to the format of the sermons.

Strikingly, the text begins with the 'action', without any introduction. Many German play texts open with an introduction by the Director, and this often ends with a prayer, before the play proper begins. The external form matches the features of the sermon texts in various respects: the elaborate capital letters that extend over several lines; the opening formulation, which states 'Dit is begin, wie vnse here die werelt zen irsten begonde ze machene ende allet des he begerde' (This is the beginning, of how Our Lord first began to create the world and all

that he intended); and the rubrication. The sermons begin with elaborate initials and rubricated headings. The stage directions are kept very brief; verb forms are sometimes in the present, sometimes in the past, which is unusual and suggests an epic text rather than a dramatic text.<sup>48</sup>

The connecting texts often begin with formulations such as 'Here [someone] does . . .' or 'Here [they] sing . ..'. Since it is not clear that these formulations are stage directions they might be thought to be references to pictures, along the lines of the previously discussed 'You should teach and preach [to] yourself'. This is indeed the suggestion to the reader of the *St Georgen Sermons*. We are left wondering whether the reader of the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* should try and evoke the images which the text suggests. Would that be the reaction of a reader or listener who was used to seeing and interpreting images (in churches, for instance)? Would this exhort such a reader or listener 'to contemplate visually the workings of God's Grace and the veneration of Christ and thus employ all the spiritual strengths of the person at prayer'?<sup>49</sup> In this context one may think of the picture of the so-called *Hildegard Prayer Book* (c. 1190), the *Lilienfeld Prayer Book* (c. 1200), or as a very late example, the *Prayer Book of Abbot Ulrich Rösch* (1472). In these prayer books pictures are accompanied by short Latin texts, often in banner form, with German commentaries or explanations. The pictures are accompanied by appropriate prayers on the facing pages. The art historian Elisabeth Klemm suggests that 'these books could originate from the Rhine or

<sup>48</sup> There has been lively discussion about the purpose of play texts, sparked by the assertion by Werner Williams-Krapp in the Introduction to his edition of the *Sündenfall und Erlösung* that very few of the surviving texts had been intended or used for performance: *Überlieferung und Gattung: Zur Gattung 'Spiel' im Mittelalter. Mit einer Edition vom 'Sündenfall und Erlösung' aus der Berliner Handschrift mgg 496* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1980). This hypothesis was soon vigorously opposed. Independently Rolf Bergmann and Hansjürgen Linke produced sets of criteria according to which one can establish whether a text was associated with an actual performance. Rolf Bergmann, 'Aufführungstext und Lesetext: Zur Funktion der Überlieferung des mittelalterlichen geistlichen deutschen Dramas', in *The Theatre of the Middle Ages*, ed. by H. Braet and others (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985), pp. 314–51; Hansjürgen Linke, 'Versuch über deutsche Handschriften mittelalterlicher Spiele', in *Deutsche Handschriften 1100–1400: Oxford Kolloquium 1985*, ed. by Volker Honemann and Nigel F. Palmer (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988), pp. 527–89. Cf. Bernd Neumann and Dieter Trauden, 'Überlegungen zu einer Neubewertung des spätmittelalterlichen religiösen Schauspiels', in *Ritual und Inszenierung: Geistliches und weltliches Drama des Mittelalters*, ed. by Hans-Joachim Ziegeler (Tübingen: Niemeyer 2004), pp. 31–48.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Ochsenbein, 'Zur Geschichte des Gebetbuchs von Abt Ulrich Rösch', in *Beten mit Wort und Bild: Der Meditationszyklus der Hildegard von Bingen*, ed. by Peter Ochsenbein (Zollikon-Zürich: Kranich-Verlag, 1996), pp. 9–24 (p. 16).



the Rhine-Maas area'.<sup>50</sup> Among these prayer books with text and illustrations, the *Hildegard Prayer Book* contains the Latin prayers and titles for the illustrations as well as short accompanying texts in Rhenish Franconian which can be dated to the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>51</sup> It covers the whole span from Creation to Last Judgement, with the emphasis on Christ's public ministry. The scope of this essay does not allow me to embark on a detailed comparison of the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* with the vernacular texts accompanying the illustrations in the *Hildegard Prayer Book*, but it can safely be stated that a first review suggests great similarity with the stage directions for the play. Equally valid would be a comparison of the Latin fragments in the play text with the Latin texts on the banners in the *Hildegard Prayer Book*. In any case such a meditation combining words and pictures, which is known to have been an established phenomenon in the Rhine-Maas region, seems worth considering as one possible explanation for the expository nature of many of the stage directions in the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*.<sup>52</sup>

### Conclusion

It has become a convention to regard the last text in MS 70 E 5 of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague as a dramatic document. The possibility that this text, in which the dialogue is so prominent, is not dramatic, is suggested by the fact that it is included in a manuscript of which the remainder consists exclusively of sermons and tracts. These are not to be thought of as the basis for preaching but for edifying, devotional reading. Scholars have long ago reached the conclusion that these vernacular written sermons do not relate to preaching practice but constitute a written discussion of more or less abstract theological

<sup>50</sup> Elisabeth Klemm, 'Der Bilderzyklus im Hildegard-Gebetbuch', in *Codex latinus monacensis 935 der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1987), pp. 71–359 (p. 277).

<sup>51</sup> On the palaeography and localization, see Karin Schneider, 'Die deutschen Texte in CLM 935', in *Codex latinus*, pp. 51–69.

<sup>52</sup> This would mean a similar textual combination of word and image as I have posited for the convent at Wienhausen and the Easter Play fragment discovered there. Its painted decoration of the nuns' choir, and its tomb with the image of Christ, might have been the context for a meditation aided by a dramatized text. See Carla Dauven-van Knippenberg, 'Ein Schauspiel für das innere Auge? Notiz zur Benutzerfunktion des *Wienhäuser Osterspielfragments*', in *'Ir sult sprechen willekomen': Grenzenlose Mediävistik. Festschrift für Helmut Birkhan zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by C. Tuczay and others (Bern: Lang, 1998), pp. 778–87.

questions in accordance with the rhetorical framework of a sermon. Drama research also recognizes the existence of play texts intended for reading rather than for performance, though the tendency persists to regard them as reflections of dramatic activity. As far as the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* is concerned I hope to have demonstrated that there are other visually oriented texts which might provide a different context for a text with dialogue within the framework of edifying, devotional reading.<sup>53</sup> This work seems to be an excellent example of the dictum that ‘the development of literary forms and genres [can develop] an internal dynamism’.<sup>54</sup> Its key position in the evolution of drama and its varying attributions to different genres have been determined by its form and the context in which it has been transmitted. Its classification has also been determined by tentative, often contradictory scholarly opinions; such attempts to classify must always leave room for manoeuvre.

In order to establish the parameters and review overhasty conclusions of earlier research, some tentative and even provocative observations have been included here. Their starting point was the urgent need to pay attention to the hitherto neglected context in which the work survives. Though new light has been cast on this matter, particularly thanks to Gumbert’s palaeographical studies, further detailed examination of the relationships is required. The start which has been made here, by putting the work into the context of sermons or prayer books with accompanying text and pictures, is no more than that: a first attempt at looking beyond the borders of the dramatic genre. Nevertheless we can end with a definite insight by quoting Coun: ‘The codex is a good example of simultaneous borrowing from east and west.’<sup>55</sup> Finally I would like to add that the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* is an excellent example of overlapping genres in a devotional context, and therefore in every respect a borderline text.

<sup>53</sup> This does not preclude the possibility that the author of the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* was acquainted with and had produced dramatizations of episodes from the story of Man’s Redemption, since we have very early dramatizations of biblical episodes from the Rhine-Maas area and interaction with versions in romance languages is likely in the bilingual border areas.

<sup>54</sup> Joachim Heinze, ‘Literarische Interessenbildung im Mittelalter: Kleiner Kommentar zu einer Forschungsperspektive’, in *Mittelalterliche Literatur im Lebenszusammenhang: Ergebnisse des Troisième Cycle Roman 1994*, ed. by Eckart Conrad Lutz (Freiburg: Universitäts Verlag, 1997), pp. 79–93 (p. 88).

<sup>55</sup> Theo Coun, ‘De Limburgse literatuur en de slag van Woeringen’, in *Woeringen en de oriëntatie van het Maasland*, ed. by Jan Goossens (Hasselt: Vereniging voor Limburgse Dialect en Naamkunde, 1988), pp. 65–88 (p. 77).

## PAUSA AND SELETE IN THE *BLISCAPEN*

W. M. H. Hummelen

### *Introduction*

If the Netherlands occupy an important position internationally in terms of the serious secular drama, such as *Esmoreit*, *Gloriant*, and *Lanseloet van Denemerken*, in the case of religious drama that position is very minor indeed. Except for the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play* (which cannot strictly speaking be seen as part of Middle Dutch literature), the oldest representatives of the religious drama of the Low Countries are the first and the last part of an originally seven-part cycle dedicated to the Seven Joys of Maria. Since 1448 each year one of the plays was performed by the Archers' Guild after the procession in honour of Our Lady of the Zavel in Brussels.

It was not until 1882 that the manuscript of *Die sevenste bliscap* came into the public domain, whereas the manuscript of *Die eerste bliscap* was not available to the public until 1962. This did not help research into the *Bliscapen*, and it was also hampered by the fact that the worship of Our Lady was their central concern. This devotion was an important aspect of conflict during the Reformation and the result has been that since then many non-Catholics could not find much enthusiasm for the study of these texts. Modern performances have, as far as I know, only ever been done by and for Catholics, in contrast with, for instance, *Elckerlijc* which is of course also a Catholic text but does not contain any elements of the worship of Our Lady.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A Dutch version of this essay has appeared as "Pause" en "selete" in de *Bliscapen*, in *Spel en spektakel: Middeleeuws toneel in de Lage Landen*, ed. by H. van Dijk and Bart Ramakers (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2001), pp. 113–53. We are grateful to the publishers for permission to include this seminal article here in translation. In 2001 Femke Kramer and her Theatre

Contrary to what might now be expected, I will not attempt in this contribution to highlight the qualities of the *Bliscapen* as performance texts, but I will limit myself to a detail, albeit a detail which is extremely important for their performance but also for the staging of countless later plays.

The most important terms in the Middle Dutch plays of the fifteenth century indicating that music will be performed are *selete* and *pausa*. The first time these stage directions appear is in *Die eerste bliscap van Maria* and in *Die sevenste bliscap van Onser Vrouwen*, two plays which most likely originated in the fourth, and perhaps partly in the fifth, decade of the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The two grand old men of Dutch Studies, Kalff and Leendertz, discussed the possible significance and function of these terms in two separate publications which appeared almost simultaneously in 1907 and which therefore did not take into consideration each other's ideas.<sup>3</sup>

Both scholars supposed that the *Bliscapen* were the work of one author but neither of them paid heed to the information inherent in *Die eerste bliscap*.<sup>4</sup> Leendertz edited only *Die sevenste bliscap*, and Kalff seems to have discarded this information because he soon realized that it would undermine his assumption that *Die sevenste bliscap* was a model for what he saw as the use of mime and tableaux vivants in Middle Dutch drama. Kalff did not go on to answer the questions he provoked; Leendertz did give answers but only in footnotes and moreover in contradictory terms. In the first such note he posed the thesis that *pausa* or *selete* signifies a musical performance, a song or a show performed in the interval between two spoken parts. In the following note he departed from this by stating that *pausa* or *selete* signified an interval or rest and completed this by furnishing a convincing argument that *pausa* meant music, even *instrumental*

Company Marot did perform a play largely based on the *Bliscapen* for an audience of members of SITM and the general public, in a small village to the north of Groningen, where the triennial Colloquium of the Society for the Study of Medieval Theatre was held that year.

<sup>2</sup> *Die eerste bliscap van Maria en Die sevenste bliscap van Onser Vrouwen*, ed. by W. H. Beuken (Culemborg: Tjeenk Willink/Noorduyn, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> G. Kalff, *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche letterkunde* (Groningen: Wolters, 1906–12), II (1912), 368–69. *Middelnederlandsche dramatische poëzie*, ed. by P. Leendertz (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1907), pp. lxxxvii–xcii. In the *Bliscapen* the term *selete* (be silent) dominates; in later additions the correct Latin form *silete* is used. In the same way the French form *pause* was used originally and in later additions the Latin form *pausa*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. W. H. Beuken, 'Het auteurschap van de *Bliscapen*: Een vergelijkend onderzoek', *Leuvense Bijdragen*, 60 (1971), 216–44 (pp. 217–18, 241–42).

music. Unfortunately, he based this latter argument only on changes in the manuscript which had been inserted as late as 1559 by a producer of the plays.<sup>5</sup>

The editor of the first scholarly edition of both *Bliscapen* together, W. H. Beuken, opted for the safest of Leendertz's hypotheses, namely that *selete* indicated an interval or rest.<sup>6</sup> He did not venture to suggest what *pausa* might mean even though that term is already present in the oldest manuscript of *Die eerste bliscap*. Just like Leendertz he determined his position only on the basis of *Die sevenste bliscap*, completely ignoring later changes in the manuscript. All this means that the question of the meaning of the terms *pausa* and *selete* in the secondary literature on the *Bliscapen* has never led to thorough research into these aspects of the plays. Yet it is an aspect that deserves investigation if only because in the drama of the *sixteenth* century *pausa* occurs hundreds of times. Beuken did give his full attention to those instances in the *Bliscapen* where explicit references to music appeared.<sup>7</sup> It has not, however, really been taken into account that *selete* and *pausa* in the manuscripts of those plays also referred, as early as the middle of the fifteenth century, to musical performance.

<sup>5</sup> According to a note in the manuscript the direction of the plays in 1559 and 1566 was in the hands of the town rhetorician Frans van Ballaer. See below note 17 and note 31.

<sup>6</sup> *Die eerste bliscap*, ed. by Beuken, pp. 27–28. He cites in support a study by E. A. Schuler, *Die Musik der Osterfeiern, Osterspiele und Passionen des Mittelalters* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1951), pp. 46–48, who judges *silete* to be no more than an indication of 'rein aufführungstechnische Natur' and denies any connection with the content of the play. Schuler agreed in that with F. J. Mone, *Schauspiele des Mittelalters* (Karlsruhe: Macklot, 1846), II, 157. Because of a drawing with the division of several places of action over the market square, Mone realized that a performance would have to include considerable changes in the location of actors and spectators. These would lead to lengthy intervals and a lot of noise which would have to be calmed down with, probably, singing a *silete*. However, the drawing turned out to belong to another, much more recent play than Mone had thought. Cf. also A. M. Nagler, *The Medieval Religious Stage: Shapes and Phantoms* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 35–40; this however does not negate the idea of a connection between the singing of a *selete* and a certain *mise en scène*.

<sup>7</sup> Beuken (*Die eerste bliscap*, p. 38) distinguishes two functions: connecting with that which precedes and pointing to that which follows. The first function is the most likely in five cases: A2, 5, 6, 14, 16; the second one only once: A14; in one case it is uncertain: A7. See note 8 for an explanation of the notations A, B, etc. Beuken does not explain why the alternative possibility in these six cases is less likely. For the far from exclusive connection between *pausa/selete* and the interruption in the rhyme sequences, see *Die eerste bliscap*, ed. by Beuken, nn. 1, 41–48.

### Significance

And yet this information can be gleaned simply by studying the text of the *Bliscapen* themselves. At Mary's request God arranges for (almost) all apostles to be present at her deathbed in her small house at the foot of Mount Sion. In *Die sevenste bliscap* we are told and shown that they are gathered up from the four corners of the earth, first St John the Evangelist and then the others, in quick succession and by miraculous means: angels wrap them in clouds and deposit them on her doorstep.

Of the two stage directions which prescribe this, the first one (B9) does not begin with *selete* but the second one (B10) does.<sup>8</sup> This is connected with the fact that simultaneously with St John's removal from Ephesus (B9), where he is preaching, a conversation between some of his listeners, the *gebueren*, takes place, in which they talk about his sermon and above all about the miraculous way in which he disappeared from their midst.

From the fact that this scene did not occur in the sources consulted by the author but was created specially for this occasion we can deduce that he had a special purpose in mind: namely to cover the simultaneously occurring mime. A similarly 'covering' scene is lacking in the relocations of the other apostles (B10). Since the removal of St John was accompanied by a 'covering' scene, the indication of *selete* was apparently not necessary. *Selete* must therefore mean something that was audible, lasted a while, and could function as a signal that the play continued even though there was no speech. The only element that fulfils those requirements and fits into a medieval play is music.<sup>9</sup>

Another peculiarity of *Die sevenste bliscap* is that it contains several implicit directions with regard to music. Sometimes this consists of a duplication with an explicit stage direction, as in lines 1404–07 and in B20. However, when Mary on her deathbed says that she hears the angels 'sing and play' this indication of music stands alone. It is an understandable reaction to the stanza (lines 1167–78) which, judging by its form, was sung by two angels in the opened compartment of Heaven or in the room where Mary lies.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The letters refer to the Appendices, the numbers to the stage directions.

<sup>9</sup> In *Die eerste bliscap* too such an invented scene occurs, that of the *neighbours* (A14): see below.

<sup>10</sup> The stage direction, B16, gives the director the choice to let God speak from above or below. This does not imply uncertainty about the place where heaven had to be situated: see *Middelnederlandsche dramatische poëzie*, ed. by Leendertz, p. xci. According to the *Legenda*

Something similar happens in the case of the implied stage direction in one of the first lines of the last scene of the play. The apostles conclude that Mary has ascended to God's throne because of the heavenly music they hear (lines 1541, 1583–84). Their remarks can only refer to music immediately preceding their words. The only possible direct pointer that music was indeed performed lies in the isolated *selete* (B21) between this scene and the preceding one, which is still set 'in Yndia'.<sup>11</sup>

What does attract attention in *Die eerste bliscap* are the two styles of the stage directions.<sup>12</sup> In some instances the various elements which are crucial for director and actors are connected to each other by conjunctions or they are (partly) embedded in adverbial or adjectival adjuncts. In others those elements stand unconnected next to each other; Beuken indicated this in his edition by either a colon or a semicolon (A2, 3, 14, 16, 17).<sup>13</sup> Such uncoordinated stage directions provide another clue to the significance of *selete* and *pausa*.

In these cases the two terms could not have exactly the same meaning. That would be illogical and, indeed, in two instances their difference is crystal clear (A14, 17). The manuscript of *Die sevenste bliscap* yields an explanation. The director's corrections of 1559 which were mentioned earlier have a bearing on, amongst others, three tableaux vivants (B7–8, 11–12, 15) with accompanying *pausae*. These have, however, not caused the crossing out of the directions which were already in place and which relate to the various mimes (B6, 10, 14). The

*Aurea*, Christ, with the greater part of the population of heaven, descends in this case to Mary's death chamber.

<sup>11</sup> Whilst travelling from India to Jerusalem Thomas has heard and seen the Assumption of Mary, as he relates later (line 1590). It is impossible to measure this distance in verses since this is the place where an entire quire is missing (c. 350 lines), though no doubt it was detailed in the manuscript. In any case that quire did contain an angel who explained everything and the tangible evidence of Mary's girdle falling down to earth from heaven (lines 1591–94). The music performed at the Assumption was in fact too far removed from the final scene for an immediate reaction. The author here goes back in time a little and at the same time speeds up Thomas's arrival. Later the necessity of an antecedent closely preceding the reaction of the apostles was apparently interpreted differently by the director and this was the reason that the stage direction was deleted.

<sup>12</sup> The *seletes* (A8, 20) added one century later are not included in the discussion here but will be investigated later; nor do I here pay attention to the cases in which the brevity of *selete* or *pausa* is emphatically indicated.

<sup>13</sup> All punctuation of the directions quoted in the Appendices is by Beuken.

director who added them would have been able to distinguish his own writing from the earlier script.

In all probability that is how the original (the *legger*) of the extant manuscript would have looked. After the first, or the second, performance of *Die eerste bliscap* that manuscript — with all the corrections resulting from the performance(s) included — functioned as the model for the so-called archive copy belonging to the Zavelkerk, which has come to us by very circuitous routes. The mistakes made by the scribe who wrote the archive copy show that he worked without any attention for the content of the play. When it came to the stage directions he did not look at them with the eyes of a director: he simply copied everything that had not been crossed out. The distinction between what was original and what was a correction was thereby obliterated. Later directors had no choice but to pick their way through the ensuing inevitable confusion.<sup>14</sup> The effect is that in the archive copy several directions occur next to each other, and it is frequently impossible to decide whether, and how, they are connected and which is the original text.

What is clear however is that there was a distinction between *selete* and ‘singing or playing’ (A2),<sup>15</sup> between *selete* and *pausa* (A3), and between *pausa* and ‘singing or playing’ (A16). That is only possible if *selete* corresponds with one of the constituents of ‘singing or playing’ and *pausa* with the other. Given the consistent correspondence between singing and *silete* in German religious drama<sup>16</sup> from the fourteenth to the end of the sixteenth century, we may conclude that in the *Bliscapen selete* refers to singing and *pausa* to instrumental music. This agrees with Leendertz’s interpretation of the *pausae* in the 1559 manuscript additions<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> J. Deschamps, *Middel nederlandse handschriften uit Europese en Amerikaanse bibliotheken: Tentoonstelling* [. . .] 24 oktober-24 december 1970 (Brussel: Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, 1970, 1972), pp. 136–39, gives the dates of the manuscripts of the *Bliscapen* as c. 1455.

<sup>15</sup> The only meaning of *spel* which is pertinent here is that of ‘instrumental music’.

<sup>16</sup> Schuler, *Die Musik*, pp. 316–20, lists barely any cases in which the *angeli* or the *pueri* of the boys’ choir which performed the role of the angels are not specifically mentioned as the singers of the *selete*, though his examples come from many plays and date from the beginning of the fourteenth until the end of the sixteenth century.

<sup>17</sup> Leendertz (*Middel nederlandse dramatische poëzie*, p. lxxxix, n. 2) based his argument on the fact that the *pausae* were numbered, which can only be meaningful if in the interval, the hiatus in acting, something occurred that could be counted. My view is that the numbering is connected with the cooperation of musicians who were not in the service of the church, as was the case with the choir, and wanted to know what was expected from them or rather, what payment they could expect.



and with the significance of *pausa* in the late fifteenth-century play *Van de V vroede ende van de V dwaeze Maeghden*.<sup>18</sup>

Though this conclusion may seem to suggest otherwise, the distance between *selete* and *pausa* could be bridged. Besides a choir of angels Heaven also contained an organ (B20). The Jews in *Die sevenste bliscap* characterize the music heard at Our Lady's funeral as 'organ playing and sometimes strings / And sometimes singing' (lines 1406–07). According to St Peter Our Lady's Assumption was accompanied by the sound of 'singing and melodious chords' (line 583), and as has been mentioned, Our Lady herself hears 'singing and playing' on her deathbed (line 1194). It is likely that the singing will have been accompanied at times by instrumental music, but the stage directions do not employ a separate term for such occasions. The difference between *selete* and *pausa* therefore decreases, which explains why in later French plays we encounter directions such as *silete d'orgues* and *pose de canchons*.

Characteristic of these instances is that the music is never specified. Clearly this points to music *ad libitum* and the only further qualification of the nature of the music, in French plays, consists of *ung beau, joyeux silete*. The variants found in Middle Dutch also appear in French: *lors se fait en paradis grande joye et melodie* (then there is great joy and music in Paradise) and *lors se dit ung motet au Limbe* (then there is a motet in limbo).<sup>19</sup> Here too text and music are *ad libitum*: as becomes clear from *Yci se poelt faire ung motet qui voelt en Paradis* (Here you can have a motet, as you wish, in Paradise).<sup>20</sup> Alas, there are no examples of the music or the songs chosen in such instances.

<sup>18</sup> *Het Spel van de V vroede ende van de V dwaeze maegden*, ed. by M. Hoebeke (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1959). The lost manuscript may have dated from the early sixteenth century; the play is generally considered as fifteenth century. The stage direction after line 502 contains *ende men speelt pause* (and they play pause). J. Walch, *Studiën over litteratuur en tooneel* (Maastricht: Boosten & Stols, 1924), p. 187, n. 2, pointed out that the entire play opens with a *pausa*, which can only confirm the opinion of the first editor of the play, that *pausa* here means 'piece of music' every time: J. Ketele, *Het spel van de vyf vroede ende van de vyf dwaeze maegden* (Gent: Maetschappij der Vlaamsche Bibliophilen, 1846), p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Gustave Cohen, *Le livre de conduite du régisseur et le compte des dépenses pour le mystère de la passion de Mons* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1925; repr., 1974), pp. 43, 341.

<sup>20</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, p. 451. The instruments for a piece of music are often not indicated since this depended largely on tradition and the availability of musicians.

### *Relationship to the Performance of the Plays*

Schuler discusses the nature of *selete* purely in terms of its technical characteristics (*rein aufführungstechnische Natur*),<sup>21</sup> and he simply means that the term occurs where there is a change of location within the play. That, after all, causes an interruption and restlessness amongst the audience which is then allayed by the singing of a *selete*. He does not take into account Mone's observation that in open air performances it was precisely the changes of location over some considerable distance which caused a hiatus in the performance, because the audience too had to change place.<sup>22</sup> Schuler does not perceive that changes in the *mise en scène* made by the director must have had consequences for the musical intermezzi.

In the case of the *Bliscapen* very little more is known about the *mise en scène* than can be inferred from the texts themselves. The plays were performed from 1448 onwards, one every year until the cycle of seven had been completed. This took place on the Grote Markt in Brussels; the scaffold stage was paid for and provided by the town.<sup>23</sup> An item in the accounts of 1486 mentions 'pipers of this town [...] on the playhouse of Our Lady'.<sup>24</sup> This must refer to the second storey of Mary's *huseken* or mansion,<sup>25</sup> which was probably a feature of all seven

<sup>21</sup> Schuler, *Die Musik*, p. 46.

<sup>22</sup> Mone, *Schauspiele*, II, 157, n. 5.

<sup>23</sup> *Die eerste bliscap*, ed. by Beuken, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> P. de Keyser, 'Nieuwe gegevens omtrent Colijn Cailleu (Coellin), Jan de Baertmaker (Smeken), Jan Steemaer (Perchevael) en Jan van den Dale', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde*, 53 (1934), 275–82 (p. 276): the reading for 1485–86 quotes the following: 'item the 4 pipers of this town for 4 evenings on the *estrade* of the town hall and on the mansion of Our Lady paid the sum of 10 s. to make music between the breaks in the action [*pauseringhe*]'. Cf. also the virtually identical item in the accounts for 1501–02. Similarly for 1497, see J. Duverger, *Brussel als kunstcentrum in de XIV<sup>e</sup> en de XV<sup>e</sup> eeuw* (Antwerpen: De Sikkel, 1935), p. 86.

<sup>25</sup> Duverger, *Brussel als kunstcentrum*, quotes expenses from the account of the same year 1486, from which it becomes clear that on the occasion of the Royal Entry of Maximilian as Holy Roman King, the Rhetoricians Chambers *Den Boeck* (The Book of Revelation) and *De Corenbloem* (The Cornflower) had *speelhuysen* (mansions), which were mounted on wagons and decorated with two wooden columns, constructed for them. The churchwardens of the Zavelkerk lent for that occasion some mansions which were in normal circumstances probably used for the Zavel procession. See C. R. Hermans, *Geschiedenis der Rederijkerskamers in Noord-brabant* ('s-Hertogenbosch: Muller, 1867), Appendix 2, p. 255. In the introduction to the 1561 edition of the plays of the competition, *Landjuweel*, in Antwerp in that year *speelhuys* is used

*Bliscapen*. The musicians were placed on the top floor of this important part of the mise en scène. Other places of action in the plays, where appropriate, will also have had the use of such *speelhuysen* or mansions.

In 1556, during a visit of Philip II, one Spanish chronicler was put in mind of the Colosseum<sup>26</sup> when he saw a performance of a *Bliscap*. This could mean that the performance took place in the middle of the market square whilst the audience stood or sat around the stage as in an amphitheatre, from ground level up to the windows of the surrounding houses. It may be that this arrangement was only for this particular occasion, the royal visit, but it need not mean that the various locations were also arranged in a circle on the stage, rather than in a linear manner. The circular arrangement was common in Germany, at least in the sixteenth century, the linear arrangement in France.<sup>27</sup> Naturally, the stage would have faced the Town Hall since that is where the most important visitors would have been seated.

When three years later, in 1559, the organization of the performances finally became the province of the Rhetoricians, they might have introduced the modern mise en scène to which they had become accustomed. In that arrangement the action took place in front of a façade with a number of curtained openings, which gave access to compartments. The stage directions which Van Ballaer, the director of the 1559 performance, inserted with regard to the opening or closing of the Heavens, Hell, and Our Lady's house and about the use of tableaux vivants in the compartments point in this direction. It is however difficult to assess the connection between these stage directions and the changes, made in the same year, in the musical intermezzi.

to indicate a complicated stage façade with three compartments on the lower floor and three on the upper floor. Even though a similar façade had already been used in 1486 by the Brussels Rhetoricians there is no indication that the mansion of Our Lady which the Great Guild of the Archers used for the *Bliscapen*, also in 1486, had such a compartmentalized façade. Cf. W. M. H. Hummelen, 'The Stage Façade Reflected in *Narcissus ende Echo* of Colijn Cailleu (d. 1503)', in *European Theatre 1470–1600: Traditions and Transformations*, ed. by M. Gosman and R. Walthaus (Groningen: Forsten, 1996), pp. 131–39 (p. 132, n. 4).

<sup>26</sup> *Die eerste bliscap*, ed. by Beuken, p. 24.

<sup>27</sup> This difference between the German *kubische Raumbühne* (cubic stage space) and the French frontal or *flächiche Simultanbühne* (which is only supported by limited evidence) is noted by H. Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte Europas* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1957), I, 276. Given the close contacts between the cities on either side of the linguistic frontier in the Burgundian realm, it is most likely that in Brussels a French mise en scène was used.

We do not know anything concrete about the performances before 1559, and we can only surmise, since this is about the only aspect of medieval *mise en scène* of which we can be certain, that Heaven and Hell would be placed as far away as possible from each other. Hell and Heaven, and Earthly Paradise just below Heaven, with other places of action such as Limbo and Adam's dwelling-place immediately adjoining, also occur in the *Bliscapen*. At the very beginning of *Die eerste bliscap* Envy moves, within the time span of one verse, from Hell to Paradise which therefore on the Brussels stage would not have been situated at a great distance from each other. Even so, the stage directions in the *Bliscapen* might reflect a performance tradition in which there did exist a much greater distance between Heaven and Hell.

In the first part of *Die eerste bliscap* (lines 258–916) the action jumps four times from one end of the stage to the other, every change of location marked by a musical intermezzo (A3, A4, A5, A6). As a connection in content between music and those locations (Adam's dwelling-place on earth, Limbo, and Hell) seems unlikely, the musical intermezzi must, in this instance, be the result of a performance tradition based on the displacement of the audience. Between lines 380 and 616 the devils travel from Hell via Adam's house to Heaven and back without any *selete*, but the characters actually speak whilst moving and thus there is no hiatus in the action and no room for a musical intermezzo.

In *Die sevenste bliscap* Hell is used only once but in that instance *selete* has a double function. Completely in accordance with what happens earlier in this play, it accompanies the 'being absorbed in prayer' of the apostles in Our Lady's house. Meanwhile, *die wile*, Lucifer appears in the mouth of Hell. The two servants who respond to his call<sup>28</sup> are ordered to try and tempt Mary on her deathbed, but some verses later they are barred by the Archangel Michael and slink dejectedly back to the Hell-mouth. This can, for the most part, equally well have taken place halfway between Hell and Our Lady's house. This means that the next *selete* (B16) is connected not so much with the performance tradition as with the fact that the next scene opens with the appearance of God.

### *Relationship to the Content of the Plays*

We now move from a tradition of performance technique as an explanation for *selete* to a type of interpretation that according to Schuler is wholly irrelevant

<sup>28</sup> Naturally after the *selete* had sounded. The simultaneity of the praying of the apostles with the appearance of Lucifer is, in a dramatic sense, a daring coup.

since *selete* in his view has no connection at all with the content of a play. We may, however, embark on our line of argument by taking into account two corrections, added at a later stage, to the manuscript of *Die eerste bliscap. Innich gebet* (Passionate Prayer) penetrates Heaven by making a hole with a drill in the compartment where *Ontfermicheit* (Mercy) is situated; the stage direction in question is elaborated by the addition of a *silete* (A8; preceding scene: under the floor of Heaven). At the end of the play Heaven opens once more to show Gabriel receiving the command to go and proclaim the Annunciation to Our Lady, and the same corrector adds the same direction in the margin (A20; preceding scene: in the temple). These instructions have nothing to do with the distance between the locations of the preceding action and Heaven but are in both cases — and, I think, not accidentally — connected with the content of the play. In the eyes of the corrector *selete*, or another indication of the singing of angels, was inserted here as an imperative as at the start of other scenes in Heaven (A9,<sup>29</sup> A12; cf. B3), or at the appearance of Him from whom Heaven derives its meaning (A1, B16<sup>30</sup>).

### *Limitations*

These last remarks already imply the questions with which we are confronted time and again if we approach *selete* and *pausa* in terms of content rather than from the point of view of performance technique. They arise from the fact that it is easier to define precisely what the content is than the distance between two locations, which could vary between one performance and another. In this case one can for instance ask why, if the text has not been changed, as is clear from the manuscript, those *silettes* which were added later did *not* form part of the original. Why did another scene in Heaven (lines 497–595) not qualify for such an addition? It is possible to show various differences with the scenes in Heaven which are introduced by *seletes* and argue that in the scene between lines 497 and 595 a *selete* would not be suitable, but it is not possible to show that the author/director did not use his *seletes* in a quite arbitrary manner.

<sup>29</sup> Mercy speaks first here, not God. On the other hand, after the opening of heaven there is first a brief singing of the *selete*, ‘while one can see God seated manifestly in all His Glory’.

<sup>30</sup> Leendertz (*Middelnederlandsche dramatische poëzie*, p. lxxxviii) did point out that heaven stayed open between the following scenes in heaven and that therefore no other *seletes* were needed. They were certainly superfluous if the director, in Mary’s deathbed scene, made Christ and his entourage act on the lower floor (B16: cf. note 10).

One of the causes of this apparent arbitrariness may be found in the divergent conditions which determined his work. To begin with he was restricted in time: the maximum time available for the performance was no more than the afternoon of the Sunday before Whitsun. The morning was entirely taken up with the procession in honour of Our Lady of Zavel. That could have been a factor in Van Ballaer's simultaneous addition of three tableaux vivants and six *pausae* to *Die sevenste bliscap* and his deletion of 305 lines.<sup>31</sup> Every director could presumably be sure that he could freely make use of the boys' choir of the Zavelkerk, but whether that included the organist and other musicians is uncertain.<sup>32</sup>

At the end of the fifteenth century, as mentioned before, the performers of the *Bliscapen* could enlist the help of the town's pipers who were then paid separately by the town.<sup>33</sup> Did the authorities impose any restrictions in this respect? That was certainly the case if musicians other than those in the service of the city were used. Besides, the financial resources for the hiring of musicians may have differed from year to year. The lack of sufficient archival data means that the restricting conditions under which a director may have had to work can never be completely reconstructed. Naturally, in determining how best to employ the available musical resources, personal preference may have been a deciding factor.

Present-day readers are also faced with the quality of the manuscript. In the case of most sixteenth-century plays that is a great deal poorer than that of the *Bliscapen*. They have been transmitted in manuscripts which are not far removed

<sup>31</sup> Tableaux vivants occur in many Rhetoricians plays, but always connected with the rest of the play by a character, the explicator. Cf. W. M. H. Hummelen, 'Het *tableau vivant*, de *toog* in de toneelspelen van de rederijkers', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde*, 103 (1992), 193–222. Very occasionally the showing of such *togen* is preceded and concluded by a *pausa*. Purely ornamental use of a tableau vivant, as Van Ballaer does, is unknown. I agree with Leendertz (*Middelnederlandsche dramatische poëzie*, p. xc, n. 2) that 2 *pausa* (B8) should come after instead of before *tiberius keyser*. Making a distinction between two musical *intermezzi* which follow each other immediately, let alone two 'rests' in that position, is indeed not very meaningful. By placing 5 *pausa* (B13) at the point where, because of a cut, the action of laying Mary on her bed is without accompanying text, Van Ballaer retains the style of this play in which repeatedly musical *intermezzi* and mimed actions are combined with each other. The position of 6 *pausa* I can only understand if Van Ballaer intended to replace *selete* (B16) with instrumental music, or to let God come down to earth, for instance during or after the opening phase in heaven.

<sup>32</sup> In Mons (1501) the list of expenses does not mention rewards for the choir or for the musicians, *menestreux*, only for the *vicarii* or choir masters and organists who sang and played the organs: cf. Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, p. 575.

<sup>33</sup> See note 24 above.

from the date of origin of the plays. Even if it is clear that the archive copies obscure differences between the oldest text and corrections later added to it, the differences between the archive copies and the later changes can mostly be quite easily detected. The worst damage occurred in the years after the tradition of performing the *Bliscapen* came to an end: in *Die sevenste bliscap* this meant the loss of an entire quire and the illegibility of important stage directions because of the use of a reagent. Not to mention the disappearance of all five *Bliscapen* between the first and the last play.

However, we cannot complain about the quality of what remains. Evidence of the situation as it was around 1455 has survived or can be fairly easily reconstructed. Even Van Ballaer's cuts have not led to irretrievable loss of text. He was obviously irritated by what seemed to him an exaggerated adoration of Our Lady, but he was not an iconoclast *avant la lettre*. The changes which he and his predecessors made in the structure of the plays (see below) and in the use of the musical intermezzi were of secondary importance.<sup>34</sup> Apparently the *Bliscapen* did not offend greatly in this respect and we may therefore conclude that they were linked with a specific tradition.

### *Tradition*

There is only one other Middle Dutch play which might have enabled us to come to know and understand that tradition: *Van de V vroede ende van de V dwaeze Maegden*<sup>35</sup> (*Of the five wise and the five foolish virgins*), were it not that more than three quarters of the nineteen *pausae* in the play have exactly the same function.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> In four places Van Ballaer inserted *intermezzi* played by pipers (lines 475, 711, 925, 1105) which immediately follow the cuts he made. Line 1105 has only an indication that a cut was necessary. The connection between cuts and added intermezzi is not clear at all.

<sup>35</sup> See note 18 above. Other fifteenth-century plays do not have *pausae* or are only extant in late manuscripts or prints which do not give a reliable impression of the tradition of the stage directions: cf. Hummelen, 'Stage Façade', p. 132, n. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Hoebeke (*Het Spel*, nn. 17, 49) assumes that the *pausae* are sung, basing that assumption on the *Zehnjungfrauenspiel* which is at least a hundred years older than the *Maegden*, and supposes that the Virgins could not combine singing with lighting their lamps (lines 308–09). That leads him to conclude that not every *pausa* indicates music. This argument disappears if *pausa* is interpreted as a musical intermezzo performed by others than the actors. To see *pausae* as nothing other than a means to demarcate the scenes assumes wrongly that the medieval audience would have had an interest in that.

The distribution of the musical intermezzi is based chiefly on a division of the speaking characters into six groups: the Wise Virgins, the Foolish Virgins, the Devils, the Bridegroom, the voice from Heaven, and the speaker of the prologue and the epilogue. These six groups act individually or are brought in contact through dialogue.<sup>37</sup> Apart from some *pausae* in Heaven<sup>38</sup> a new group comes up at every *pausa*. The group which had a speaking part prior to that *pausa* enters into dialogue with the new group or becomes non-participatory either by keeping silent, by leaving the stage (*vertrecken*), by sitting down and going to sleep (*gaen [...] sitten slapen*), or by remaining behind in a compartment that will later be closed.<sup>39</sup> What is most important for a comparison with the *Bliscapen* is that the *Maegden* has *pausae* around and during an episode in Heaven (A22) and before and after the prologue and epilogue. The latter are clearly unconnected with the content or the *mise en scène*; rather, it shows the original function of *silete*, that of a signal asking for attention.

Since there are no other Middle Dutch plays which can illuminate the tradition of musical intermezzi, I would like to include in this discussion the

<sup>37</sup> The voice from Heaven and the expositors in prologue and epilogue only appear separately. True, within the three first of the six groups dialogues can develop; entries during those dialogues are not a significant factor in the insertion of intermezzi.

<sup>38</sup> The scene in which the two Wise Virgins are received into Heaven includes two deviant *pausae*, when the Bridegroom mimes crowning the Virgins and putting a ring on their fingers, and after the singing of the *Te Deum* and *Sanctus*. Then there are *pausae* before the opening and after the closing of the compartment of Heaven, though that is a moment which, apart from its religious significance, is also marked by the appearance of a new group. The action of the Bridegroom has two phases: after the prayer of the Wise Virgins, the end of which is marked by a *pausa*, he is merely part of the *tableau vivant* that becomes visible when Heaven is opened, then he establishes contact with them. A similar situation (lines 402–03) lacks a *pausa*, which is connected with the fact that in this case both groups consist of mortals and that the preceding scene is not a *tableau vivant* but a verbal exhortation amongst the members of the newly appearing group.

<sup>39</sup> The stage showed a row of ten *husekens*, mansions flanked by, from the perspective of the audience, Heaven on the left and Hell on the right. Hoebeke (*Het Spel*, p. 46) assumes that Heaven was located in between the mansions of the Foolish and of the Wise Virgins, but this implies that he neglects the emphatic influence of the presence of Hell on the position of Heaven. The visit of the two Foolish Virgins to the oil merchant is only indicated by a reference to their departure: 'Then they go from there' (*Dan gaen zij van daer*) and their destination: 'let us go and buy' (*laet ons coopen gaen*) (line 433). The joining of disappearing and explaining suggests the presence of a façade (*speelhuys*) of which the mansions (*husekens*) form a part and in or behind which the audience can imagine the oil merchant.



director's copy of a *Mystère de la Passion Nostre Sauveur Jhesu-Crist* performed in 1501 in Bergen (Mons), some thirty miles south of Brussels.<sup>40</sup> This manuscript has several advantages: it is a direct reflection of the point of view of the two brothers Delechiere who were responsible for the direction of the play; it was drawn up specially for this performance; it has a complete set of staging directions; and, since the text consists of some 35,000 lines, it provides an excellent idea of the tradition of creating a *mise en scène* which is closer to the Brussels custom than the German tradition.<sup>41</sup>

In the *Livre de conduite du régisseur* the stage directions *silete* and *pose*, to give the French forms, occur next to each other, with similar frequency. Just as in the Middle Dutch plays, the difference between singing and instrumental music is not important, as becomes clear from the instruction *quant il [=Noël] a fait son oraison, on chante en Paradis ung silete, ou on jue des menestreux ou de quelque instrument, ou poze d'orgues* (when he has finished his prayer they sing a *silete* in Paradise where minstrels play, or some instrument, or some organ music).<sup>42</sup> The frequency of the musical intermezzi rather decreases in the course of the various performance days. The total number is not nearly as large as that in the *Bliscapen* if the difference in length is taken into account.

No musical intermezzi are used when there is action in Heaven or in jumps from Heaven to Hell and vice versa — both rare in comparison with the *Bliscapen*. Not to mention the many times that *silete* or *pose* is lacking in moments when changes in location are combined with radical changes in dramatis personae, moments which typically create hiatus in the performance. Other than in the *Maegden*, musical intermezzi do not occur at moments when the action is about to take place, quasi-simultaneously, in two different locations.<sup>43</sup>

In cases where the characters themselves have to move from one place to another, the mimed journey is often accompanied by music: *lors ilz [=Joachim and Anna] viennent au Temple presenter Marie et, tandis, Silete* (then they come to the temple to present Mary, and then *Silete*).<sup>44</sup> There is even an adaptation of the intermezzo to the duration of the move: *Lors ilz en vont. Pose d'orgues ou aultre, tant qu'ilz venront là* (Then they go. Some organ music or something else

<sup>40</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*. The *Mons Passion* has not survived.

<sup>41</sup> The *Frankfurter Dirigierrolle* dates, moreover, from the middle of the fourteenth century.

<sup>42</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, p. 29.

<sup>43</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, pp. 83, 284.

<sup>44</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, p. 48, also pp. 43, 62, 152, 270, 423.

when they arrive there).<sup>45</sup> Thus it is understandable that ‘music’ *without* a simultaneously occurring action did become a symbol of the passing of time. The seven days waiting for the return to the Ark of the raven and the dove sent out on reconnaissance by Noah are represented by a *petite pose* and a *silete*.<sup>46</sup> The confinement of Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, which takes place in a closed compartment, is represented by a *pose d’orgues*.<sup>47</sup>

The function of *silete* as a signal asking for attention can easily have led to the function of asking for pious concentration in the case of actions with an important religious meaning such as sacrificing,<sup>48</sup> praying,<sup>49</sup> burying.<sup>50</sup> Similarly it occurs when connected with certain unique events: the Holy Spirit descending upon Our Lady;<sup>51</sup> the dressing of Christ in a purple royal cloak in the Mocking of Christ by the soldiers; and the brutal stretching of Christ’s arms in the Crucifixion.<sup>52</sup>

The combination of this function with ‘being silent’ as a mimed action results in what we would call moments of poignant silence: between the breaking of the bread and the announcement of the betrayal at the Last Supper; and Christ’s silence in response to one of Herod’s questions.<sup>53</sup> A striking early example of this occurs between Mary Magdalene’s confession and the absolution of her sins by Christ in a fourteenth-century *Osterspiel* from St Gall: *Hic cantet angelus ter: silete. Tunc Jhesus cantet versum: ‘dimissa sunt [peccata tua]’ et dicat. [. . .]* (Here three angels sing: *silete*. Then Jesus sings the verse ‘Forgiven are your sins’ and he says [. . .]).<sup>54</sup> This is clearly reminiscent of Truth’s thrice-repeated question during the Trial in Heaven as to who would be willing to be sacrificed for the Redemption of mankind (*Die eerste bliscap*, lines 1182–87). Here they all remain silent (*Hier swigen si alle*), says the stage direction. It is certainly true in the case of mimed actions of lesser importance that they could easily have been

<sup>45</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, p. 97, also pp. 9, 24, 39, 55, 57.

<sup>46</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, pp. 28–29.

<sup>47</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, p. 57.

<sup>48</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, pp. 29, 30, 33, 112.

<sup>49</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, p. 29.

<sup>50</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, pp. 17, 236.

<sup>51</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, p. 57.

<sup>52</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, pp. 353, 354, 367.

<sup>53</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, pp. 281, 313.

<sup>54</sup> Mone, *Schauspiele*, II, 83–84.

accomplished without a musical intermezzo to highlight it or to fill in an auditory hiatus.<sup>55</sup>

### *Traditional and Non-traditional*

The evidence discussed in the previous paragraph confirms my conclusion that *pausa* and *selete* in the *Bliscapen* indicate musical intermezzi. The use of those intermezzi is illuminated in a different manner. *Die eerste bliscap* provides most of the examples of the use of music to symbolize the passing of time (A16–19); *Die sevenste bliscap* possesses the only example of this particular use in an action which is not hidden from the audience owing to technical considerations or ‘accidentally’, but deliberately concealed (B19). In that play the musical intermezzo is the accompaniment to a journey, or rather, a complex of journeys of which the points of departure are not shown (B10). In *Die eerste bliscap* a return journey to Nazareth is emphatically mentioned in the scene at the Golden Gate but it is doubtful whether that would have taken much time: Joachim’s journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem had earlier merely merited a *pausa lutter*, a little *pausa* (A13).

After the departure from Jerusalem there followed originally Anna’s reaction to her pregnancy (lines 1572–85), preceded by the stage direction *sang; spel opt lanxst* [i.e. singing; playing as long as possible] (A14). In particular the second part can be interpreted as a symbol of the passing of some time, say, three months. Later on this stage direction and Anna’s ecstatic monologue had another scene inserted between them. In that scene two ‘neighbours’ discuss indignantly the attitude of the priests in the temple towards Joachim. The precise position of this scene is uncertain: should it be here or after Anna’s monologue?<sup>56</sup> This

<sup>55</sup> Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, pp. 221, 236 for instance.

<sup>56</sup> The Brussels and the Leuven manuscripts of *Die eerste bliscap* are compared in a monograph by J. G. M. Kienhorst, *Lering en Stichting op klein formaat: Middelnederlandse rijmteksten in éénkoloms boekjes van perkament* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), I, 46–48, 52–55. Already the indication sign and the gloss *Nota* after line 1585 (Brussels MS) show that someone, possibly a producer, held a different opinion with regard to the precise location of the scene with the *gebueren*, i.e. after Anna’s monologue. In the Leuven fragments of *Die eerste bliscap* the order is indeed scene at the Golden Gate – Anna’s monologue – *gebueren* scene. But this manuscript dates from the end of the fifteenth century. Cf. R. Lievens, *Nederlandse letteren in de Leuvense Universiteitsbibliotheek: Catalogus van de tentoonstelling 31 augustus – 4 september 1982* (Leuven: Faculty of Arts, 1982), pp. 41–47. The remarks (lines 1549–51) about Joachim’s happy mood do not occur in these fragments, which could imply an adaptation to the order of scenes in the

uncertainty extends to the two following musical intermezzi (A15, A16). Which of the two exists as a result of the added scene with the two 'neighbours'? In its present place this episode has the same function as *spel opt lanxst* but why then is that part of the staging direction not deleted? It is no longer possible to determine what the function of the three intermezzi (A14, A15, A16) might have been or why one of them (A15) has later been crossed out.

Apart from journeys other silent actions are also accompanied by musical intermezzi. In *Die sevenste bliscap* this is the case with Mary's visits to the places where her Son has suffered (B1), her praying for consolation (B2), God enthroned in Heaven (B3), St John on his way to preach (B6), and the apostles praying at Mary's deathbed (B14).<sup>57</sup> Instances in *Die eerste bliscap* are the forcing of an entry into Heaven (A7), perhaps Joachim's prayer (A10), but certainly his sacrifice (A11) and Our Lady's prayer in the Annunciation (A21). Musical accompaniment of an event that was emphatically hidden from view (B19) occurred in Mons as well, in the case of Elisabeth's confinement. A musical intermezzo before an epilogue was not unusual as is witnessed in *Maegden*, and in Mons *ung motet* was sung at that moment.

In the case of the *Livre de conduite* the combination of musical intermezzi with mimed events which are important in a devotional respect is unusual. The Middle Dutch author on the other hand was keen to employ this: witness the fact that he choose to insert such musical mimes not only at the beginning but also at the end of an action (B1, B14).

However helpful the comparison with the *Livre de conduite* may have been, there remain a few instances where we can conclude only that the author obviously liked using musical intermezzi lavishly (A2, A10). In this respect the Brussels plays resemble the *Maegden* where, as mentioned above, such intermezzi are inserted wherever another group comes up. Would it therefore not be more illuminating to investigate where, and why, intermezzi are lacking?

It is doubtful whether anything sensible can be concluded in this respect without an investigation of simultaneity in the *Bliscapen*. It is clear that the action often takes place in two places at one time, for instance in Heaven and on

Leuven manuscript. The sequence Golden Gate – *gebueren* – Anna's jubilation monologue is, at least for modern sensibilities, rather more apt: the neighbours react straight off and there is a clear dramatic progression to Joachim's reaction to the birth of Mary.

<sup>57</sup> In 1559 was added the — mimed — laying of Mary on her bed (B13). Only in this and in the aforementioned instance is there any explicit mention of movement. In the other cases one could speak of tableaux vivants which would function as openings to the following clause.

earth. More precisely, two places of action are in use at the same time: speech occurs alternately in one or the other, and the two locations are to be interpreted as one coherent place of action. What consequences did that have for the use of musical intermezzi? Did Hell and Limbo, temple and the surrounding area of the temple, function as one (composite) place of action and is that why a musical intermezzo is absent after line 770, line 1849, and line 1912 of *Die eerste bliscap*?

There is no doubt that simultaneity fulfils an important function in the *Bliscapen*. It seems entirely plausible that for instance in *Die sevenste bliscap* the apostles do not return to their *Standort* (station) from the moment that they are gathered in Mary's house until after her burial. The author solves this by indicating that they are otherwise occupied during scenes which occur elsewhere, by letting them be absorbed in prayer or involved in the funeral procession.<sup>58</sup> The director Van Ballaer clearly had no liking at all for such simultaneity and he counteracts it in *Die sevenste bliscap* by the recurring closing of Heaven and Hell and the removal of the apostles from the stage during the laying-out of Our Lady which takes place behind closed curtains.<sup>59</sup> This means the elimination of the possibility of a reaction to events on earth by means of music from Heaven or by means of *gerommel ende geruusch* (rumbling or noise) from Hell. On a more general point: it would appear that with the medieval *mise en scène* as a point of departure, that of the Rhetoricians develops in a different direction, that the cosmic dimensions of the old stage give way to the more 'domestic' proportions of the new façade in Rhetoricians staging. Insofar as the musical intermezzi are concerned, the question is not whether they survive the transition to a different mode of staging — that is quite clear — but how they survive that change.

<sup>58</sup> In Mons the Ark has a window which looks out on the earthly and the heavenly paradise; Mary (before the Annunciation) and Christ (in Gethsemane) pray facing paradise (Cohen, *Le livre de conduite*, pp. 28, 55, 284). It is not likely that Heaven was closed at such moments.

<sup>59</sup> Van Ballaer's stage direction next to B19 is: *dapostelen wat inne*. This indicates that the Apostles retire behind the façade.

## Appendix A

### *Distribution of Selete and Pausa in Die eerste bliscap*<sup>60</sup>

- |         |                                            |
|---------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1–75    | <i>First Prologue</i>                      |
| 76–150  | Hell: Conspiracy between Lucifer and Envy. |
| 151–93  | Paradise: Planning by Envy and Serpent.    |
| 194–257 | Paradise: Temptation of Adam and Eve.      |
1. *Selete briefly* [crossed out later].
 

|         |                                                                                    |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 258–342 | Paradise: God angered, punishes Adam and Eve and commands angel to guard Paradise. |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
  2. *Selete; singing or playing* [both in same hand, crossed out later].
 

|        |                                                 |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 343–79 | Adam's dwelling place: Laments of Adam and Eve. |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------|
  3. *Selete; pause* [both in same hand, crossed out later].
 

|         |                                                          |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 380–453 | Hell: Devils conspire to cause Adam to be judged by God. |
| 453–96  | Adam's dwelling place: Adam summoned.                    |
| 497–587 | In front of and in Heaven: Trial and Judgement.          |
| 588–616 | On the way to Hell: Joy of returning devils.             |
  4. *Great rumbling and noise will be made in hell [. . .] And then selete.*

|         |                                                                                                                      |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 617–79  | Adam's dwelling place: Seth to Paradise; meanwhile Adam dies.                                                        |
| 680–738 | Near Paradise; back at Adam's dwelling place: Seth receives and plants branch of Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. |
  5. *Here they will sing or play.*

|         |                                           |
|---------|-------------------------------------------|
| 739–70  | Hell: Joy about increase in doomed souls. |
| 771–838 | Limbo: Laments; deliverance prophesied.   |
  6. *Singing or playing.*

|         |                                                                                              |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 839–916 | Near Heaven: <i>Fervent Prayer</i> hears <i>Bitter Misery's</i> lament and goes into action. |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
  7. *Singing or playing. Fervent Prayer will meanwhile [. . .] drill a hole into heaven etc. and will say there above: [. . .]*
  8. Added later: *silete.*

|        |                                                |
|--------|------------------------------------------------|
| 917–60 | <i>Fervent Prayer</i> appeals to <i>Mercy.</i> |
|--------|------------------------------------------------|
  9. *Selete very briefly. Meanwhile God can clearly be seen, seated.*

|          |                                                                                        |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 961–1400 | Heaven: Debate of the Four Daughters of God. The Son is prepared to sacrifice himself. |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
  10. *Selete.*

<sup>60</sup> Line references are to *Die eerste bliscap*, ed. by Beuken, and the additions to the manuscript are listed there on pp. 23–26.

- 1401–11 Temple: Joachim approaches with sacrifice.
11. *Pause.*
- 1412–60 Temple: He is chased away by the priests during the sacrifice. Returns home.
12. *Here there is singing and playing in heaven.*
- 1461–1527 Heaven; Nazareth; Jerusalem: God sends angel to Joachim announcing the birth of his child. Joachim goes in search of Anna.
13. *Pause litter.*
- 1528–45 Jerusalem: Meeting with Anna at *the Golden Gate*; they return home happily.
14. *Singing; playing as long as possible.*
- 1546–71 Nazareth: Neighbours react to the inappropriate behaviour of the priests in the temple.
15. *Selete* [later crossed out].
- 1572–85 Nazareth: Anna thanks God for pregnancy.
16. *Pause; singing or playing* [both in the same hand].
- 1586–1654 Temple: Joachim informs priests of the birth; an angel says that she shall be called Maria.
17. *Selete; away* [= all characters leave stage].
- 1655–1717 Nazareth; temple: The three-year-old Mary brought to the temple; parents return home.
18. *Selete.*
- 1718–55 Temple: Priests praise Mary.
19. *Selete. Now Our Lady will be grown-up.*
- 1756–92 Nazareth: Joachim and Anna envisage Mary's departure from the temple.
- 1793–1849 Temple: Planning by priests and Mary: what now? Intervention from angel; search for marriage partner.
- 1850–1912 Near the temple?: Candidates talk amongst themselves.
- 1913–64 Temple: Joseph is chosen; Mary and Joseph each to their own home.
20. *Silete* [later hand; see 916].
- 1965–2012 Heaven: Command from God to Gabriel.
21. *Pause briefly. Gabriel kneels before Mary, and she lies and prays and reads in her chamber, her hands raised up to God.*
- 2013–50 Nazareth: Annunciation.
22. *Selete.*
- 2051–80 *Epilogue.*

## Appendix B

### *Distribution of Selete and Pausa in Die sevenste bliscap*

- 1–60      *First Prologue.*
- 61–165    Jerusalem: Mary, left behind in loneliness, receives from St John  
*a little house [ . . . ] at the foot of the Mount of Syon*, from which she  
 can visit every day *the places where God suffered his passion.*
1. *Selete briefly. Meanwhile she visits the places and then they go away.*
- 166–210   Jerusalem: Two Jews take offence and accuse Mary.
- 211–305    *The Potentate* and *The Elder* reassure them: after her death her  
 body will be burnt.
2. *Selete. Mary is praying in her chamber.*
- 306–26    Mary's house: Mary prays for consolation.
3. *Selete. Meanwhile the heaven will be opened where God is enthroned, and he will  
 say to the angel Gabriel [ . . . ]*
- 327–71    Heaven: God wants to bring Mary into Heaven. Gabriel must  
 announce her death and reassure her.
4. In later hand: *God's throne closes.*
- 372–493   Heaven; Paradise; Mary's house: He leaves and goes to Mary via  
 Paradise (to fetch palm branch). He tells her that she is about to  
 die, reassures her about the potential threat from the Jews and  
 from the devil and promises that the apostles will be present at her  
 deathbed.
- He takes his leave.
- In later hand, next to 475: *stop. pipers.*
5. In later hand, next to 492: *throne closes.*
- 494–506   Mary's house: Mary gives praise.
6. *Selete. here John shall stand and preach a sermon to the people in the town of  
 Ephesus.* [below this, in a later hand:
- 7, 8. 1. *pausa* / 2. *pausa/tiberius keyser.*
- 507–71    Ephesus: St John's sermon.
9. *Here two angels shall come with a cloth and shall wrap it around St John and the  
 cloth shall shine like a cloud. And thus wrapped up they shall take him to Mary's  
 door, or in another way, as is best.*
- 572–639   Ephesus: Astonishment of the audience. People take leave of each  
 other.



640–759 Mary's house: St John knocks and is received with open arms. He asks God for the presence of the other apostles; Mary trusts in Gabriel's words.

In later hand, next to 711: *pp.* = *pipers*

10. *Selete. Here the apostles shall come together in a cloud before Mary's door, in great astonishment.* Next to this, in a later hand,

11. below each other: 3. *pausa/ voluciaen/*

12. *verona/tiberius/ 4. pausa.*

760–946 Mary's house: Astonishment of the apostles until they recognize the house, knock and are admitted. Mutual exchange of information follows.

In later hand, next to 925: *cut pipers.*

13. In later hand, next to 946, following an instruction from St John to the other apostles to put Mary on her bed: 5. *Pausa.*

947–90 Mary praised and consoled by the apostles.

14. *Selete. Here the apostles shall kneel in prayer. And meanwhile Lucifer arrives and summons his servants, to go and get Mary's soul.*

15. In later hand, next to this and below each other: *pilatus/tiberius/voluciaen/ senatueren/verona.*

991–1137 Somewhere between Hell and Mary's house: the stage direction is carried out but Michael stops the devils and sends them back.

In later hand, next to 1117: *pipers stop*

16. *Selete. Here God shall speak, from above or below, as one wishes, to his heavenly host.*

17. In later hand, next to this: 6. *pausa.*

1138–1262 Heaven(?) and Mary's house: God calls on all inhabitants of Heaven to help Him to bring Mary to Heaven. Mary answers, takes leave of the apostles, and dies.

18. *Here the apostles shall all kneel as if they read their prayers* [rest of stage direction illegible through use of reagent]

1263–74 Heaven: God welcomes Mary's soul [hiatus; stage direction illegible through use of reagent]

1275–98 Mary's house: three virgins will take care of Mary's body and request to be left alone with it.

19. *Selete* [later crossed out]. *Meanwhile they shall make everything ready.* In later hand, next to this: *the apostles a bit off stage*, and in later hand, next to the following line: *shoves open.*

- 1299–1355 Mary's house and Heaven: One of the virgins invites the apostles back in to put Mary's body in the coffin. God Himself shows where she must be buried. The apostles praise the name of God. [hiatus; probably a stage direction crossed out].
- 1356–96 In and around Mary's house: The funeral procession starts to move; St John with the palm branch at the head.
20. *Here they lift the bier and sing: Exit de Egypto. Alleluia. And the angels in the throne shall also sing and play the organ. Then the Jews come when they hear it and make trouble.*
- 1397–1515 Between Mary's house and the Vale of Josaphat: The Jews discover that Mary's funeral is taking place and try to get at the coffin. But they are blinded and, when they touch the coffin, their hands wither. In the middle of their lamenting the text is interrupted. [hiatus; quire missing]
- 1516–39 [India: Thomas, who was unable to be with Mary in time, hears, whilst travelling, the singing of the angels at the Assumption of Mary. An angel explains to him what is happening] With the last words of the angel and Thomas's prayer addressed to Mary, the text continues.
21. *Selete.* [crossed out later]
- 1540–1692 Jerusalem: The apostles hear heavenly music, which must be connected with Mary's Assumption. Thomas arrives and tells his story. The grave is inspected and proves indeed to be empty. Mary's praise is sung with great conviction; then they take their leave of each other: *We must go and prepare the way for God.*
- 1693–1733 *The epilogue.*

## RHETORICIANS AND RELIGIOUS COMPROMISE DURING THE EARLY REFORMATION (C. 1520–1555)

Gary K. Waite

With the arrival of Lutheran reform ideas in the Netherlands by 1519, Rhetoricians found themselves in a difficult position. Many, such as Cornelis Everaert, the famous playwright of Bruges, had become enamoured of Erasmus of Rotterdam's gentle anticlerical spirit and criticism of the crasser forms of religiosity, such as pilgrimages, the veneration of saints and relics, and indulgences. If Everaert's plays are anything to go by, many *rederijkers factors* hoped that their satirical commentary on the state of the Church and society would help restore religious life to a more biblical form. Of course Luther was a very different personality from Erasmus, bold, storming, and angry, a biblical scholar trained by scholasticism to love confident assertions and vigorous debate while at the same time rejecting the philosophical underpinnings of scholasticism's methodology. At the beginning, many younger humanists saw Luther as a kindred spirit to Erasmus and admired his forthright approach, hoping that this would make the final push towards reform of Christendom. By the time they realized the very great differences between Luther and Erasmus, it was too late; the Reformation was underway and the conflict had begun. In 1523, the burning in Brussels of two Lutheran Augustinians and the razing of the Antwerp Augustinian priory set the stage for what was to come. Very quickly efforts at peaceful discussion and compromise were swallowed up by the need to delineate between 'orthodox' and 'heretic' and the secular authorities' attempts to crush the latter.

By 1530 governmental suppression had succeeded only in driving away the clerical and educated leaders of the reform movement (centred in conventicles which concentrated on reading and discussing the Bible), leaving it in the hands of lay people, especially artisans and journeymen. Rhetoricians, whose composition and performance of religious drama gave them the status of lay experts on

religion, aimed to fill the vacuum by helping their lay contemporaries understand the issues involved (for examples of manuscript plays, see Figs 1 and 2). The surviving plays show very clearly that they took this mission seriously. Yet, they generally reshaped religious reform ideas to fit the unique culture and economy of the urban landscape of the Low Countries. In a word, they sought to balance the widely felt desire to reform Church and society with the needs of local business and secure governance. Such efforts led to some very interesting plays indeed.

In general, during the 1520s and especially 1530s, there were a number of Rhetoricians playwrights who dramatized Lutheran ideas in a very unambiguous fashion; the several Lutheran plays performed during the famous contest in Gent in 1539 are obvious examples.<sup>1</sup> Charles V's efforts to chastise the *rederijkers* for what he saw as their part in the popular uprising in Gent which occurred scant weeks after the Rhetoricians contest sent a chill throughout the Chambers of Rhetoric, and very few playwrights and performers dared to be so brazen in their support of Reformation ideas thereafter (Fig. 3).<sup>2</sup> Thus, during the 1540s and early 1550s, most reform-minded *factors* became more subtle in presenting reform ideas, using their great facility for hidden or double meanings to great effect. It might be suggested, in fact, that they were following the approach to religion that has come to be known as Nicodemism, of hiding one's real beliefs under an appearance of orthodoxy or conformity, which became extremely popular in the Netherlands during these decades. In the 1550s, compelled by Calvin's challenge for the true believers once again to take a public stand despite the dangers, many Rhetoricians began presenting biblical drama that, given the scriptural clues provided, was as open a defence of Protestant beliefs as possible.

<sup>1</sup> For a summary, see my *Reformers on Stage: Popular Drama and Religious Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515–1556* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 149–53. For a more detailed analysis, see J. B. Drewes, 'Interpretatie van de Gentse spelen van 1539 – Grenzen of onmacht van de filologie', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde*, 100 (1984), 241–73. Several of the essays in *Conformisten en rebellen: Rederijkerscultuur in de Nederlanden (1400–1650)*, ed. by Bart Ramakers (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), also deal with the *rederijkers* and religion.

<sup>2</sup> In 1543 Johan Utenhove wrote and had performed on his estate near Gent a Lutheran play, an event which forced his exile from his homeland. See Johan Decavele, 'Jan Utenhove en de opvoering van het zinnespel te Roborst in 1543', *Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Soevereine Hoofdkamer van Retorica 'De Fontaine' te Gent* (hereafter *JdF*), 39–40 (1989–90), 101–16; Dirk Coigneau, 'De Evangelische Leeraer: "een spel vul heresien"', *JdF*, 39–40 (1989–90), 117–45; and the critical edition of the play, C. C. de Bruin, 'Een seer schoon spel van zinnen ghemaect by mijn Heer Johan Wtenhove anno 32 ende is ghespeelt anno 1543', *JdF*, 39–40 (1989–90), 21–94.

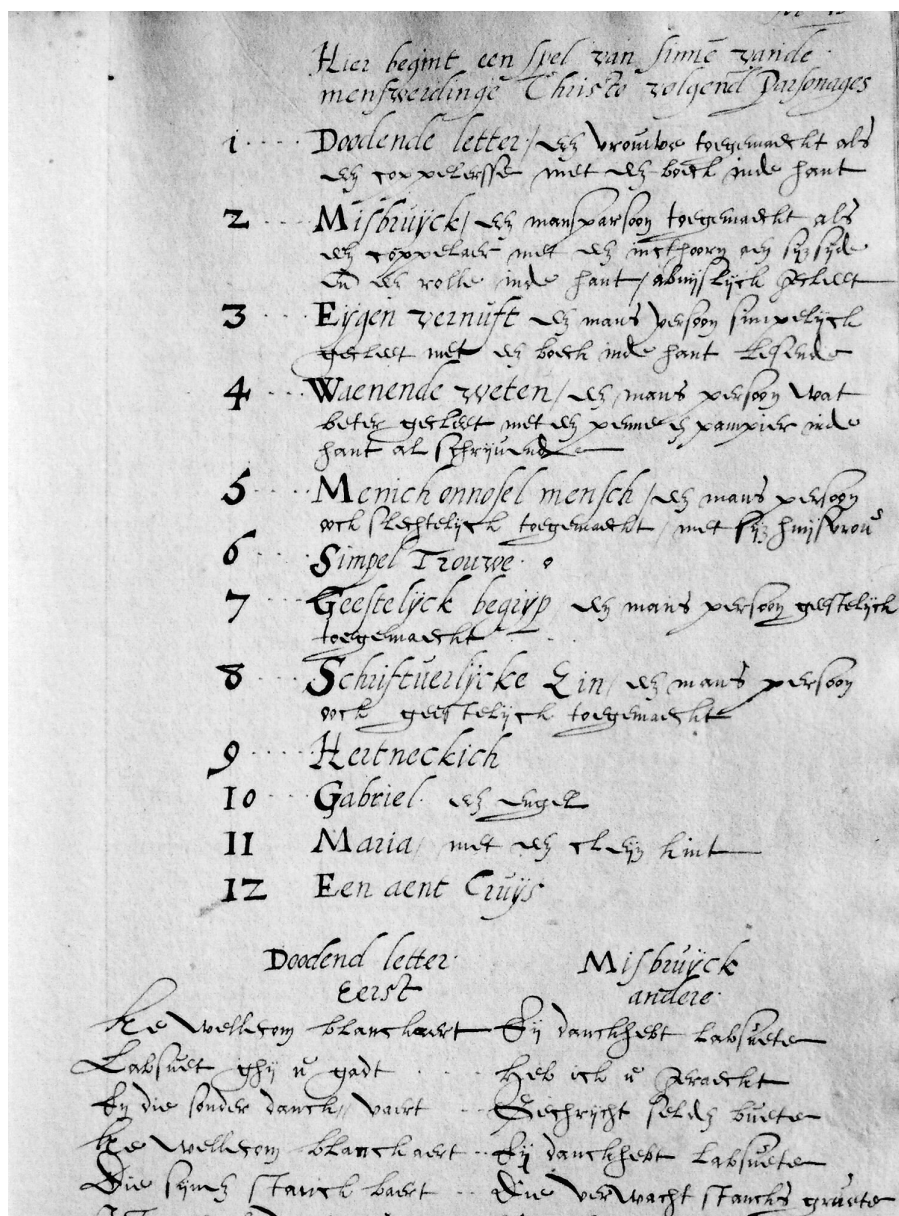


Figure 1. *De Menschwerdinghe Christi*. Title page and characters. *Trou Moet Blijcken: Bronnenuitgave van de Boeken der Haarlemse Rederijderskamer 'de Pellicanisten'*, ed. by W. N. M. Hüsken, B. A. M. Ramakers, and F. A. M. Schaars (Assen: Quarto, 1992), vol. II: *Boek B*, fol. 15. By permission of the editors.





Figure 3. Portrait of the young Charles V. Bust attributed to Konrad Meit, *c.* 1520. Reproduced by permission of Gruuthuse Museum Bruges.

Yet, this very understandable desire to spare one's skin does not fully explain the often very careful and enigmatic presentation of reform notions by many Rhetoricians playwrights. Instead I wish to argue here, perhaps more strongly than I have in my book, that many Rhetoricians were motivated by two competing desires: on the one side, to promote the reforms that they believed the Gospel called for; and on the other, to express their deep loyalty to their urban commune and to preserving the peace and tranquillity that it required to maintain economic health and social stability. They therefore sought to fuse these two concerns in ways that Luther surely would have seen as an abandonment of the uncompromising demands of the evangelical message. As a result, they composed

a number of plays with highly unusual theological concepts but which contributed greatly to the development of broader attitudes towards religiosity, confessional conflict, and religious tolerance that would later shape the laws and mores of the Dutch Republic. I would also like to suggest, somewhat more tentatively, that the transition in Rhetoricians drama from portraying real saints, biblical personages, God and the Devil, and the like to the almost exclusively allegorical *sinneken* wherein the Vices represented the inner disposition of any individual helped to encourage, or at least paralleled, the rise of a spiritualistic approach to religion and religiosity in the Netherlands.<sup>3</sup> Spiritualism was not the exclusive domain of the so-called spiritualists and 'libertines' such as Sebastian Franck, David Joris, Hendrik Niclaes, Herman Herberts, or Dirck Coornhert, to name only a few, but became an increasingly popular approach after the middle of the century.<sup>4</sup> Let us then examine a few Rhetoricians plays that I have described as compromising.

*Van ons lieven heeren minnevaer* (*Of our Dear Lord's fervent Love*) was composed by Amsterdam's *De bloeyende Eglantier* (The blooming Eglantine) Chamber, probably during the 1540s.<sup>5</sup> Involving only three characters, this simple work presents the Lutheran notion of the centrality of faith and proposals for reform

<sup>3</sup> On this trend in Rhetoricians drama, see W. M. H. Hummelen, *De sinneken in het rederijdersdrama* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1958), and most recently Marcel Ficheroux, 'Van helse intrigant tot toneelfiguur: De duivel op het toneel in de late Middeleeuwen (1400–1600)', *Trajecta*, 8 (1999), 3–30.

<sup>4</sup> On the strength of this spiritualistic approach in the Netherlands, see Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines: Confession and Community in Utrecht, 1578–1620* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 'Hubert Duifhuis and the Nature of Dutch Libertinism', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 105 (1992), 1–29, and 'Remnants of the Papal Yoke: Apathy and Opposition in the Dutch Reformation', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 25 (1994), 653–69. For the longer term development into the late seventeenth century, see Andrew C. Fix, 'Radical Reformation and Second Reformation in Holland: The Intellectual Consequences of the Sixteenth-Century Religious Upheaval and the Coming of a Rational World View', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 18 (1987), 63–80, and *Prophecy and Reason: The Dutch Collegiants in the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> *Van ons lieven heeren minnevaer*, Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Verzameling Gheurtsz 21649 (W. M. H. Hummelen, *Repertorium van het rederijdersdrama, 1500–ca.1620* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968), 1 D 2). See E. Ellerbroek-Fortuin, *Amsterdamse rederijkersspelen in de zestiende eeuw* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1937), pp. 139–47; and *Retoricaal Memoriaal: Bronnen voor de geschiedenis van de Hollandse rederijderskamers van de middeleeuwen tot het begin van de achttiende eeuw*, ed. by F. C. van Boheemen and Th. C. J. van der Heijden (Delft: Eburon, 1999), p. 40.



in a framework that would have been offensive to few. On the whole it proposed a compromise theology between Luther's controversial notions and traditional Catholicism. It begins with a farmer, *Cleyn vertrouwen* (Little Trust), complaining to his wife, *Warachtige liefde* (True Love), about their desperate poverty and the difficulty of providing for their children. His wife's response is that their hardship is God's will, for their children belong to the Lord and he will care for them. Her simple husband marches off to church to receive his financial recompense for caring for the Lord's children.<sup>6</sup> The *Pastoor* (Pastor) advises him initially to trust in God's grace for sustenance, unfortunately giving credence to the confused farmer's hope for material reward. Eventually the *Pastoor* is able to clarify the matter by asserting that those who are *over rijck* (overly prosperous) will have to answer for their love of material goods at the last judgement.<sup>7</sup> *Cleyn vertrouwen* is then handed the shield of 'Perfect Faith' and a painted figure of 'Complete Hope' and is told to stand firm with his wife, *Warachtige liefde*, for all three need to be bound together. The *Pastoor*, citing I Corinthians 13, shows that without love, all is lost, for faith without love and hope is incomplete.

It was not only Catholics who were critical of Luther's overweening emphasis on faith alone in achieving salvation, and many other Reformers, as diverse as John Calvin and Menno Simons, sought to bring love of one's neighbour back into the equation. However, the play does not present the readily identifiable clues of membership in one of those camps, nor does it defend specifically Catholic rituals or sacraments. It seems, then, to have been one playwright's attempt to promote a more balanced and less polemical version of reform.

Fortunately we have examples of how Rhetoricians presented Catholic teaching prior to the onset of the Reformation, and a play performed during the first two decades of the sixteenth century offers a particularly useful comparison as its

<sup>6</sup> True Love leaves her husband in his simplicity. To the audience she remarks that Little Trust will not find his Lord in church, 'for he is at the right hand of the Father' ('Van ons lieven heeren minnevaer', fol. 3').

<sup>7</sup> The author has some things to say about the special sins of merchants:

PASTOOR: peyst hue de ghierige gesellen

de om deertsche guet haer siel in peryckel stellen

uyt sijn om haren euen naesten te bedriegen

in haer comescap sy mennige logen liegen

men hoortse uytvliegen / alst geluyt der trompetten. (*Van ons lieven heeren*, fol. 8')

(PASTOR: Think how the avaricious brothers, who for the sake of earthly goods, endanger their soul, are keen to deceive their fellow men; in their trade they tell many lies: you can hear them fly out like the sounds of trumpets.)



Figure 4. Piramus and Thisbe. Glass Round, from the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. Photo G. Waite

subject matter — divine love — is the same as *Van ons lieven heeren minnevaer*. Two dramatic versions of Ovid's love story of Piramus and Thisbe are known from the sixteenth century (Fig. 4): a published edition from c. 1515 that has been ascribed to Matthijs de Castelein (1485–1550), the author of the first handbook for the writing of Rhetoricians drama, *De const van rhetoriken* (*The Art of Rhetoric*, pub. 1555); and an anonymous version preserved in a later sixteenth-century manuscript housed in the archives of the Haarlem Chamber *Trou Moet Blijcken*.<sup>8</sup> Both use this story of earthly love to offer up a spiritual message, although the Haarlem manuscript provides a more blatantly Christian interpretation. This variant, written c. 1518 for the Amsterdam Chamber *De bloeyende Eglantier*, uses the ancient theme of young love which cannot be consummated as an allegory for divine love. Following the suicide of the two lovers, one of the characters, *Poetelijck Geest* (Poetical Spirit) remarks to another, *Amoreuse* (Amorous) that 'he who lives according to the flesh, will die / not only physically but also in the soul'. Yet, he ponders, 'and they also preach to us daily in the city / that love

<sup>8</sup> See G. A. van Es, *Piramus en Thisbe: Twee rederijkersspelen uit de zestiende eeuw* (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1965).

exceeds all other virtues'.<sup>9</sup> His colleague is puzzled by this contradiction, until *Poetelijck Geest* explains that the preachers were referring to a different love. Pulling aside a curtain, *Poetelijck Geest* reveals a scene of Christ hanging on the cross with Mary and John below which illustrates how Piramus's death for Thisbe represents Christ's loving sacrifice for his beloved, the Church.<sup>10</sup> The play's fountain stands for Christ's wounds, which are received in the sacraments, bound to the cross.<sup>11</sup> *Poetelijck Geest* also describes the doctrine of *origo peccatij* (original sin), but in a fashion consistent with a Catholic interpretation, as explained by 'many doctors'.<sup>12</sup> Whereas a Lutheran would then proceed to describe how one can be delivered from the effects of original sin by justification through faith, our playwright instead speaks only of the love shown by Christ in taking human form and sacrificing himself, defeating the devil who thought he had him in his clutches.<sup>13</sup> While the play therefore reflects a Catholic understanding of the importance of love in salvation, it also presents its message in a sophisticated form, once again affirming that even before the Reformation Rhetoricians could have a highly developed understanding of religious doctrines, in many cases equal or superior to that of the lower clergy.

Until 1535 Amsterdam's Rhetoricians had been caught up in the swirl of radical reform activity associated with the apocalyptical Anabaptism of Melchior Hoffman and the Anabaptist kingdom of Münster (1533–35) and were severely chastised by the civic authorities for performing several anticlerical and heretical plays and for their implication — through the use of some of their props — in the Anabaptist attack on the city hall in 1535. After the 1530s Amsterdam Rhetoricians not surprisingly drew back from expressing radical reform sentiments. Instead, they sought to redirect the central beliefs of audiences in a general evangelical direction, perhaps hoping, as Luther had in 1517, that institutional abuses, such as indulgences, would fall away on their own. Their surviving plays from the 1540s and 1550s are filled with the advice to bear suffering with patience and

<sup>9</sup> *Hier begint een spel van sinnen van de Historie van Piramus en Thisbe genaempt de Sinne-lijcke Genegentheijt*, Haarlem Archief 'Trou Moet Blijcken' book B, fols 141<sup>v</sup>–149<sup>r</sup> (Hummelen, *Repertorium*, 1 OB 11), edited by G. Kalff, *Trou Moet Blycken, tooneelstukken der zestiende eeuw* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1889), pp. 29–53 (p. 49, lines 545–48).

<sup>10</sup> *Trou Moet Blycken*, ed. by Kalff, p. 49, lines 573–80.

<sup>11</sup> *Trou Moet Blycken*, ed. by Kalff, p. 51, lines 588–94.

<sup>12</sup> *Trou Moet Blycken*, ed. by Kalff, p. 51, lines 604–09.

<sup>13</sup> *Trou Moet Blycken*, ed. by Kalff, pp. 52–53. In lines 650–51, *Poetelijck Geest* describes Christ's 'buijt der cantijcken' as 'Marije, daer ick die kercke bij verclaere'.

to turn to the grace of God for forgiveness, a far cry from the Rhetoricians' involvement in radical religious activity in the 1530s. Yet, in the context of the upheaval caused by the Reformation, even mild reform proposals, when combined with a lack of a vigorous defence of Catholic doctrines and practices, must have reinforced in people's minds the ideas of Luther or other popular Reformers.

### *The Gent 1539 Competition and Spiritualism*

This shift in strategy after 1539 became necessary for all Rhetoricians as a result of Charles V's closer monitoring of *rederijkers* drama after the Gent contest and rebellion (Fig. 5). Many of the Gent plays had been openly Lutheran or reform-minded, although one of these, that performed by Antwerp's Rhetoricians, also condemned the more radical heresy of the Loyists, the followers of Loy de Pruistinck, who allegedly denied the physical resurrection of the dead. Although this new strategy only partially worked in deflecting governmental censure, it reveals how many Rhetoricians sought to position themselves as reform moderates opposing more dangerous zealotry. Others, however, sought ways to bring together the warring sides by formulating theological compromises. For example, two of the plays of the Gent competition, those of Sint-Winoksbergen and Tielt (which appear to have been composed by the same playwright) emphasized both the justification of believers by faith in the death of Christ and the importance of the sacraments as a means of grace. They also highlighted more strongly than their Lutheran-minded confreres the need for Christians to perform good works.<sup>14</sup> Against Luther, the author furthermore argued that faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, not of Christ. Even though the plays went beyond Luther in stressing the post-justification performance of good works, the Winoksbergen contribution added that believers' works are made virtuous only through Christ.<sup>15</sup> What also keeps these two plays from entering fully into the Lutheran camp is their point that people cannot expect perfect certitude of salvation but must hope in the trustworthy signs.<sup>16</sup> The author, like Erasmus, was therefore most

<sup>14</sup> 'Thielt', in *De Gentse spelen van 1539*, ed. by B. H. Ern  and L. M. van Dis, 2 vols (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1982), 1, 237–69 (Hummelen, *Repertorium*, 3 B 7); 'Wynoxberghe', in *De Gentse spelen*, ed. by Ern  and Van Dis, II, 598–622 (Hummelen, *Repertorium*, 3 B 18), esp. p. 611, lines 235–45. On the authorship, see *De Gentse spelen*, ed. by Ern  and van Dis, I, 30, where Ern  suggests that these plays show the influence of Erasmus.

<sup>15</sup> 'Wynoxberghe', p. 615, lines 345–49.

<sup>16</sup> 'Wynoxberghe', p. 620, lines 481–82.



Figure 5. Gent 1539: woodcut of the stage in edition of plays (1540). *Van de sinne-  
spelen die op het landjuweel te Gent van 12-23 Juni 1539 werden opgevoerd* (Gent:  
Joos Lambrecht, 1539), Aii<sup>v</sup>. Reproduced by permission of the Universiteitsbiblio-  
theek Gent (Res. 1627).

concerned about the practical effects of Luther's doctrine of certitude and asserted instead the importance of maintaining a virtuous lifestyle after the acceptance of justification.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the positive or negative impact of the new theology on the life of the civic community was a prominent feature of both Lutheran and Catholic drama in the Netherlands.

Some of the competitors applied a spiritualistic approach to the religious controversies. Starting in the late 1530s (if not earlier) spiritualism was an increasingly common option in the Low Countries, feeding off the inwardly turned piety of the late medieval *Devotio Moderna* and gaining strength with the horrific persecution and bloodshed of Charles V's antiheresy mandates. Several important Anabaptist leaders, in particular Obbe Philips and David Joris, followed a spiritualistic path, taking with them many of their co-religionists and leaving their more sectarian fellows, such as Menno Simons, infuriated.<sup>18</sup> Among other things, spiritualists rejected the theological disputations and confessional distinctions of the Reformers and Catholics — which often resulted in bloodshed — by emphasizing inner sanctity and love of one's neighbour. Often their disregard for external religious trappings led to a Nicodemite posture. The three Gent plays which I have identified as spiritualistic, those of Kortrijk, Menen, and Oudenaarde, developed this preoccupation with personal sanctity and love of neighbour, underpinned by a strong antimaterialism. All three answered the assigned question with the response that the Holy Spirit is the dying person's best consolation, for it is the personal assurance of the Spirit, not Luther's doctrine of justification nor the traditional Catholic means of grace, which provided certitude of salvation.<sup>19</sup>

For example, in the Menen play, *Schriftuerlicke approbacye* (Scriptural Approbation) goes through a number of potential answers to the assigned question:

<sup>17</sup> Luther, of course, also affirmed that once justified believers should live virtuous lives.

<sup>18</sup> See Gary K. Waite, *David Joris and Dutch Anabaptism 1524–1543* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), and 'The Dutch Nobility and Anabaptism, 1535–1545', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 23 (1992), 458–85.

<sup>19</sup> 'Meenene', in *De Gentse spelen*, ed. by Ern  and Van Dis, II, 371–97 (Hummelen, *Repertorium*, 3 B 11); 'Audenaerde', in *De Gentse spelen*, ed. by Ern  and Van Dis, II, 471–503 (Hummelen, *Repertorium*, 3 B 14), esp. p. 485, lines 120–23; pp. 486–87, lines 150–66; pp. 501–02, lines 465–505; 'Cortrijcke', in *De Gentse spelen*, ed. by Ern  and Van Dis, II, 537–68 (Hummelen, *Repertorium*, 3 B 16), esp. pp. 548–49, lines 75–77 and 86–91; p. 564, lines 452–64, which emphasize the importance of the Holy Spirit in revealing the secrets of God and subjugating the flesh to the spirit (p. 566, lines 504–07). See also Drewes, 'Interpretatie van de Gentse spelen', pp. 253–55, 263–67.

works of mercy, faith alone, faith working through love, trust in God's grace, the suffering, resurrection, and mediation of Christ, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit. All of these spiritual benefits merely testify that God has blessed humanity. Only the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the individual provides ultimate consolation,<sup>20</sup> while the grace spoken of in the Bible offers sinners who fear God's judgement perfect peace only when the Holy Spirit gives it directly to them. Such confirmation centres on believers' certitude that they have become 'God's elect children'.<sup>21</sup> To illustrate this point, the Menen playwright uses the example of two ill persons. The first one trusts in the word of God and in the promises of Christ, yet he is still terrified by death. The other 'triumphs spiritually', because he is inspired by the Spirit's inner working and filled by an inner peace which allows him to look forward to death.<sup>22</sup> Oudenaarde's playwright likewise emphasizes that it is only the Holy Spirit that can prepare a believer for death and make his or her works acceptable to God.<sup>23</sup>

In a similar fashion the Kortrijk work has the lead character, *Menygherande Ingien* (Manifold Talents) assisted by three Virtues: the priest *Claerckelic Wten* (Clerical Knowledge), *Dwoordt der Waerheyt* (The Word of Truth), who represents the Gospel, and *Gheestelicke Verlichtijnghe* (Spiritual Enlightenment), who reveals God's mysteries by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The play's theme focuses on the conflict between the spirit and the flesh. *Claerckelic Wten* is not able to resolve the controversy on his own, for *Dwoordt der Waerheyt* and *Gheestelicke Verlichtijnghe* are also necessary to discover the biblical answer; individuals have to immerse themselves in the Bible and allow themselves to be led by the Spirit to discover God's hidden meaning, namely that the sinner will receive mercy if he converts. Salvation by God's grace alone, without human works, and divine election are pronounced features of this play,<sup>24</sup> although there is also a great stress on the spirit subjugating the flesh after salvation. God sends

<sup>20</sup> 'Meenene', esp. pp. 378–79, lines 61–68 and lines 85–90, where *Schriftuerlicke Approbacye* remarks that not even faith working through love is sufficient on its own. And while great comfort is found in the death, resurrection, and mediation of Christ ('Meenene', pp. 380–82, lines 120–66), the greatest consolation is in the 'blyde roerijnghe des helighs gheest' (p. 383, line 195).

<sup>21</sup> 'Meenene', p. 385, lines 239–41.

<sup>22</sup> 'Meenene', p. 388, lines 305–26.

<sup>23</sup> 'Audenaerde', p. 492.

<sup>24</sup> 'Cortrijcke', p. 558, lines 313–16, and pp. 559–60, lines 345–55.

his Spirit to believers, *Claerckelic Wten* and *Gheestelicke Verlichtijnghe* affirm, like an overflowing fountain, revealing the divine mysteries.<sup>25</sup>

Although the spiritualist plays were quite unusual, Axel's actors performed the most original play at the Gent festival. Spurning all theological answers, including the Catholic solution of hope for the mercy of God, based on good works and the merits of Christ, and the Lutheran proclamation of justification by faith alone, the playwright contends that only a 'conscience at peace' provides complete trust. The author does not even use spiritualism to explain the process of obtaining such perfect inner peace. The character *Diversche Opynye* (Diverse Opinion) rejects a range of theological answers to the question of where to find true comfort; neither reliance upon faith nor hope, mercy, love, the sacrifice of Christ, nor even good works provide complete solace in the hour of death.<sup>26</sup> Instead, thanks to God's promises, inner serenity simply wells up within the believer.<sup>27</sup> A painted depiction of Christ crucified between the two thieves supports the argument, while *Schriftuerlic Verstandt* (Scriptural Understanding) explains that when the one criminal asked Christ to remember him in his kingdom, the Lord,

consciencye bekende,  
Zuver en gherust, zeyde naer zijn advijs:  
Heden zult ghij met mij zijn int paradijs.

[knowing his conscience  
to be pure and at peace, said as his advice:  
Today you will be with me in paradise.]<sup>28</sup>

This play clearly illustrates the independence of mind which Dutch urbanites could show even in the face of governmental pressure in the direction of religious conformity.

### *Compromise in the 1540s and 1550s*

After two decades of vicious religious conflict and persecution, more and more reform-minded Netherlanders turned to spiritualism to assist them in presenting

<sup>25</sup> 'Cortrijcke', p. 548, lines 73–77, 86–91.

<sup>26</sup> 'Axcele', in *De Gentse spelen*, ed. by Ern  and Van Dis, I, 305–39 (Hummelen, *Reperatorium*, 3 B 9), esp. pp. 311–13 and 316–21, lines 39–106, 278–303.

<sup>27</sup> 'Axcele', pp. 322–23, lines 320–63.

<sup>28</sup> 'Axcele', p. 327, lines 434–36.





Figure 6. Brueghel: Kermis, performance on raised stage, from Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels.

reform ideas. I have identified three clearly spiritualistic plays which can be dated to the 1540s and 1550s. One of these is Clodius Presbiter's *Een vastenspel van sinnen hie Menschen Gheest van tVleesch, die Werlt en die Duvel verleyt wordt* (*Human Spirit Deceived by the Flesh, the World and the Devil*)<sup>29</sup> which, while not containing any explicitly unorthodox ideas, possesses a very strong flesh/spirit dichotomy, apocalyptic imagery, and satire directed against both 'clerics and peasants' who have been trapped in the snares of *tVleesch* (Flesh).<sup>30</sup> It is extremely reminiscent of the writings of spiritualists such as David Joris and was certainly not the vigorous defence of Catholicism that the fathers of the Council of Trent would have preferred.<sup>31</sup> The central action of this work is the salvation of

<sup>29</sup> Hummelen, *Repertorium*, 201. An edition of this work is found in 'Een verloren vastenspel van sinnen uit de XVI<sup>de</sup> eeuw', ed. by C. G. N. de Vooy and J. J. Mak, *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde* (1953), 593–650 (here pp. 593–98).

<sup>30</sup> 'Een verloren vastenspel van sinnen', ed. by De Vooy and Mak, pp. 602–03.

<sup>31</sup> The writings of spiritualists such as Joris and Nicolaes found particular appeal among moderate Catholics dissatisfied with the rise of the Reformed church to pre-eminence in the

*sMenschen Gheest* (Human Spirit), who is rescued only by *De Liefde Gods* (The Love of God) and *Vreese van Plaeghen* (Fear of Punishment) who urge him to contemplate spiritual things or receive the wrath of God.<sup>32</sup> Yet, given the extreme contrast between the flesh and the spirit, and the allures of the former, Human Spirit finds cold comfort in this admonition; further persuasion is required.<sup>33</sup> To convince him, the two Virtues display apocalyptic images and instruct him on the true path to spiritual health, which does not lead through ceremonies, which are mere fleshly works, like those of the biblical Pharisees, but through a constant struggle against the flesh and a life lived clinging to the Spirit of God, for 'the flesh cannot sin without the consent of the human spirit'.<sup>34</sup> Human Spirit is provided with the medicine of 'loathing of sin' in the form of seven pills to assist him to purge his system of the flesh and the seven deadly sins. There is, however, no attempt to relate these pills to the seven sacraments, something that a strictly Catholic playwright surely would have done. The play concludes with another tableau vivant, this time of the risen Christ standing over a model of the earth from which peer *Duvel* (Devil) and *tVleesch* and out of which Christ draws 'a naked living soul', illustrating how he has delivered the 'spiritual soul' from the world's snare.<sup>35</sup>

In an intriguing fashion this work turns inward the apocalyptic battle (which had been such a preoccupation among reformers of all camps, most especially the Anabaptist) so that it takes place within each person's inner being as the struggle between the flesh and the spirit. This play's intense spirit/flesh dichotomy and spiritualizing of the eschatological events were major features of the later writings of David Joris and those within his circle. So too was Presbiter's

Northern Netherlands but who likewise found Tridentine Catholicism too rigid. One of the clearest examples is the career of the former Cistercian monk Herman Herberts, Reformed pastor of Dordrecht and Gouda, who, although he left his Catholic profession, was clearly uncomfortable with several key Reformed dogmas, finding a solution instead in spiritualism. See Kaplan, 'Hubert Duifhuis', and 'Dutch Particularism and the Calvinist Quest for "Holy Uniformity"', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 82 (1991), 239–56.

<sup>32</sup> 'Een verloren vastenspel van sinnen', ed. by De Vooy and Mak, pp. 628–29.

<sup>33</sup> 'Een verloren vastenspel van sinnen', ed. by De Vooy and Mak, pp. 629–30, lines 468–77.

<sup>34</sup> 'Een verloren vastenspel van sinnen', ed. by De Vooy and Mak, pp. 642–43, lines 680–701, esp. 690–91.

<sup>35</sup> 'Een verloren vastenspel van sinnen', ed. by De Vooy and Mak, pp. 648–49, esp. above line 810 and lines 835–40. Before this scene the Virtues and Human Spirit kneel and proclaim Christ as the 'true merciful medicine' and 'sole deliverer'.

comment that the flesh could not sin without the assent of the individual's spirit, which in a slightly different form provided the basis for David Joris's idiosyncratic view that the devil had no independent existence outside of the inner, sinful lusts of each individual.<sup>36</sup> While there is no strong evidence of Lutheran teaching, the author clearly depreciates the traditional ecclesiastical ceremony and means of grace as well as highlights the interior spiritual meaning of religious devotion. It seems likely that Clodius Presbiter was familiar with the writings of apocalyptical spiritualists, such as Joris, Hendrik Niclaes, and Matthias Wier (1521–60), and incorporated some of their tenets into a broadly defined reformist or Catholic framework.<sup>37</sup>

Another example of a spiritualistic play is provided by *Een spel van zinnen vander Moedere ende kindren Zebedei* (*The Mother and Children of Zebedee*), performed in an unknown city on Trinity Day (8 June) 1544. It is an allegorical/biblical play on the story of Matthew 20 about the mother of the disciples John and James who sought to win Jesus's attention to her sons' ambition.<sup>38</sup> When Jesus takes the stage with two or three other apostles, he is describing to them his forthcoming suffering and death and lamenting the external devotionism and idolatry of his contemporaries. At this moment *De Moeder* (The Mother) presents Jesus with her request, but he uses this opportunity to castigate self-aggrandizement, which was inspired by the Vices *Vleeschelic Bevroen* (Fleshly Understanding) and *Onwetende Begheerte* (Ignorant Desires). These two then rejoice that many of their followers continue to 'run to church to pray with the

<sup>36</sup> See Gary K. Waite, 'David Joris en de opkomst van de sceptische traditie jegens de duivel in de vroeg-moderne Nederlanden', in *Duivelsbeelden in de Nederlanden*, ed. by Gerard Rooijakkers, Line Dresen-Coenders, and Margreet Geerdes (Baarn: Ambo, 1994), pp. 216–31. Herman Herberts for one argued against his Reformed colleagues that the Antichrist was not the pope, but resided in each person's heart (Waite, 'David Joris', p. 26). Joris wrote that the devil was powerless without human cooperation. Joris's illustrations in his *magnum opus*, the *Wonder Book*, are quite similar to the painted figures described in Presbiter's script.

<sup>37</sup> For Matthias Wier, the brother of the surgeon Johan Wier, see Gary K. Waite, 'Radical Religion and the Medical Profession: The Spiritualist David Joris and the Brothers Weyer (Wier)', in *Radikalität und Dissent im 16. Jahrhundert / Radicalism and Dissent in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Hans-Jürgen Goertz and James M. Stayer (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 2002), pp. 167–85; and Hans de Waardt, 'Johan Wiers *De Praestigijs*: Mythes en Motivatie', in *Duivelse Bezetenheid: Beschreven door Dokter Johannes Wier 1515–1588*, ed. by Jan Jacob Cobben and Hans de Waardt (Rotterdam: Erasmus, 2002), pp. 17–74, esp. pp. 50–52.

<sup>38</sup> *De Moedere ende Kinderen Zebedei*, Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 7812 (Hummelen, *Repertorium*, 1 Y 1).

crowd' but leave it thinking they have done enough merely by visiting the sanctuary.<sup>39</sup> Their comments are not the final word, for two Virtues make clear the otherworldliness of Christ's kingdom and the need to take up the cross in imitation of Jesus. They also place special blame on *De Moeder* who, because she shared the 'weakness of women', was therefore more susceptible to the inspiration of the devil, a belief that lay at the heart of the witch stereotype.<sup>40</sup>

In its central theme this biblical/allegorical play decries the demise of true faith and love and condemns the lamentable personal ambition of Church leaders and the hypocrisy of a religion based on external trappings and superstition. It advocates instead individual, heartfelt devotion and a personal appropriation of the passion of Christ. We see in this and similar plays an attempt to create a spiritual laity who would be better equipped to lead the Church than the professional clergy who had evidently failed.

Also along Spiritualist lines is *Een meijspel van sinnen van Menschelijcke Broosheit* (*An Allegorical Mayplay about Human Frailty*) composed by a Jacob Awijts of Tholen and performed in the chamber room of Amsterdam's *In Liefde Blijvende* (Abiding in Love) in May 1551.<sup>41</sup> *Menschelycke broosheit* (Human Frailty), who seeks 'the profit of the soul which pleases God'<sup>42</sup> falls into the amorous clutches of the whore *SWerrelts ghenuechte* (The World's Pleasure). Despite her affectionate words, *SWerrelts ghenuechte*'s ultimate goal is to murder her lover's body and soul<sup>43</sup> through seven other prostitutes, the seven deadly sins.<sup>44</sup> *Vraye predicacie* (True Preaching), attired as a priest, arrives to find *Menschelycke broosheit* in deep despair, bemoaning his condition, for

Hue soudich swerlts ghenuechte laeten  
 Ick sie bisscopen legaeten abten prelaeten  
 Eedele ende ghemeyne staeten  
 Volghense al omme buyten en binnen.

<sup>39</sup> *De Moedere ende Kinderen*, fol. 7<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> *De Moedere ende Kinderen*, fol. 9<sup>v</sup>. On the witch stereotype, see among others, Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> 'Een Mey spel van sinnen van menschelycke broosheit De met swerlts ghenuechte triumpheert inden ghemeynen beyart', Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 21659 (Hummelen, *Repertorium*, 1 D 9).

<sup>42</sup> 'Een Mey spel', fol. 3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> 'Een Mey spel', fol. 5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> 'Een Mey spel', fol. 6<sup>r</sup>.

[How shall I leave World's Pleasure  
 I see bishops, legates, abbots, prelates  
 Noble and common estate  
 Following her everywhere, inside and out.]<sup>45</sup>

*Vraye predicacie* warns *Menschelycke broosheit* that his soul is in mortal danger, something he would be aware of had he attended church and listened to the learned sermons and 'opinions of the high doctors' expounding on their glosses. To this *Menschelycke broosheit* and *Wulpsche doolinghe* (Lascivious Error) respond that the clergy themselves, so little regarded these days, preach one thing but live another.<sup>46</sup> In the light of such a negative evaluation of the clergy, all that *Menschelycke broosheit* gains from the sermons of *Vraye predicacie* is an even deeper depression over his sinful state. This condition is worsened by the comments of two further characters, *Oorboorlijck comenscap* (Needful Business) and *Bescut voir scaede* (Shelter from Harm), whose function in the play is to reinforce *Menschelycke broosheit*'s desperate condition. They are followed by *Inwendich berueren* (Inward Remorse) and *Natuerlijck beseffen* (Natural Awareness), the offspring of Grace, who persuade *Menschelycke broosheit* to abandon his sinful preoccupations for charity. Their power comes from the love of the Son and the will of the Father, transmitted by the Holy Spirit and water.<sup>47</sup> Citing Romans, the Virtues convince *Menschelycke broosheit* to beg in terror for the grace of God. At this a scene of Christ on the cross appears, and *Menschelycke broosheit* finds salvation and joins 'those who live in the faith working charity'.<sup>48</sup> To support him in his Christian life the two Virtues provide him with two servants, 'good will' and 'loathing of sin'.

Like the other spiritualistic plays described here, the theology of this work could fit either a Reformed or Catholic perspective, although the emphasis on grace, the citations from Romans, reference to the Holy Spirit and baptism by water, and lack of any defence of the sacramental system (especially after 1540) might suggest a Protestant position. In addition, the work reinforces the popular belief that the religion of spiritually minded lay people was far superior to that of the professional clergy whose reputation as mediators of piety had long been in dispute. Awijts makes this point by having the clerical representative, *Vraye predi-*

<sup>45</sup> 'Een Mey spel', fol. 6<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> 'Een Mey spel', fol. 7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> 'Een Mey spel', fol. 12<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> 'Een Mey spel', fol. 15<sup>r</sup>.

*cacie*, fail to convert the erring *Menschelycke broosheit*, while the two spiritual Virtues succeed. And, while *Menschelycke broosheit*'s salvation is only through faith in Christ, his deliverance was for a social end, for works of charity. Undoubtedly *Menschelijcke Broosheit* would have found an appreciative audience among both Protestant and Catholic moderates, although zealots on either side would hardly have been satisfied with the playwright's efforts to straddle the theological fence.

Protestant plays from the 1540s and early 1550s reflect the concern of reform-minded Dutch urbanites to avoid persecution and to ensure that the evangelical message increased the populace's morality and communal charity. The emphasis on following justification by faith with a life of Christian charity also reflected the increasing influence in the Low Countries of the Swiss-South German Reformed tradition, especially John Calvin's communal reform programme, the ground for which had already been well prepared by the region's tradition of antimaterial devotionism inherited from the *Devotio Moderna*, Erasmian humanism, spiritualism, and Anabaptism.<sup>49</sup>

In several of the plays examined so far we have noticed not only a tendency to avoid the most controversial theological points in dispute but a considerable level of intellectual independence from either Catholic or Lutheran orthodoxy and a strong desire to find compromises on the divisive doctrinal issues for the sake of preserving the unity and peace of their communities. We see this concern for civic unity in many *rederijkers* scripts, such as *De Duerlijdende Man* (*The Longsuffering Man*) of 1543, the work of a Jan Valcke, about whom nothing is known except that he was obviously deeply immersed in the Scriptures.<sup>50</sup> He desired to combine the Reformed emphasis on justification by faith and Christ as the sole mediator with a fairly traditional concept of the sacraments and Church. Even so, the function of the religious characters, *Dienaer Godts* (Minister of God) and *Priester des Heeren* (Priest of the Lord), according to the *Duerlijdende Man* (Longsuffering Man), is to

Die en zal dwoort godt met Hoed [. . .] Die waerheyt vut te leeren/  
Dits myne vermoeden,  
Want Christ heur beveelt / wilt mijn lammeren vouden  
en mijn scapen behoeden [. . .]

<sup>49</sup> According to Johan Decavele, *De dageraad van de reformatie in Vlaanderen (1520–1565)*, 2 vols (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren, en Schone Kunsten van België, 1975), I, pp. xiv–xv, the influence of Calvinism became apparent in Flanders around 1545–50.

<sup>50</sup> *De Duerlijdende Man*, Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek 7812 (Hummelen, *Repertorium*, 1 Y 2).

En leeft niet bijden brood/ hoort groot en cleinen,  
 Bij alle woorden Feine/ Die gaende zijn vut gods mont.<sup>51</sup>  
 [teach us the word of God [. . .] to teach us the truth, I suppose,  
 for Christ commanded them to feed my lambs  
 and keep my sheep [. . .]  
 and do not live by bread alone / listen great and small,  
 but by all the fine words which come out of God's mouth.]

This statement mirrors urbanites' strong desire for a biblically literate, preaching clergy. In this work there appears a subtle distinction between *Priester des Heeren* and *Dienaer Godts*, for the former holds in his hands a book called 'haude waerheyt' (the old truth) while the latter has in his possession a book called 'dWoort' (the Word), possibly the Old and New Testaments respectively, suggesting that while the priesthood possessed some of the truth, their function as preachers of the word had been supplanted by the Reformed ministers of the Gospel. Yet, both *Dienaer Godts* and *Priester des Heeren* proclaim the Gospel as generally understood by the Reformed and explicate how the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled by Christ. At the same time, the playwright nowhere refers to the particularly orthodox Catholic aspects of the Mass, but emphasizes instead that only Christ is a mediator between God and humanity. This play is therefore another effort at compromise, the point of which, *Priester des Heeren* reminds his audience, is to help maintain civic unity.<sup>52</sup>

### Conclusion

What can be concluded from this brief survey of what I have described as spiritualistic and compromising plays? The evidence presented here reveals a strong tendency to eclecticism, to selecting reform ideas or interpretations from a variety of sources to fit into the indigenous religious culture. Many Rhetoricians *factors* refused to adhere strictly to a Lutheran or Reformed orthodoxy, preferring instead to find some means to adjust the imported reform ideas of Luther to fit the unique situation of the Low Countries, or to find a compromise between Catholicism and Lutheranism, approaches quite evident in the 1539 Gent competition.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *De Duerlijdende Man*, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> *De Duerlijdende Man*, fol. 9<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> See also B. A. M. Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren: Toneelkunst en processiecultuur in Oude-naarde tussen Middeleeuwen en Moderne Tijd* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), p. 443.

It is well known that in their search for external allies in the 1540s, many of the Low Countries' reform leaders were hoping to align themselves with the moderate Reformers of the South-German cities, such as Martin Bucer, rather than with the hardline and uncompromising position of John Calvin. However, by the early 1550s it was the French Calvinist preachers who won support in the southern provinces, and Calvinism soon became the leading edge of the reform movement that would so radically change Netherlandic history.

Based on my reading of the surviving plays dateable to the era of Charles V, a few Rhetoricians joined with the Calvinists, but many more continued to press for moderation so as to assuage the fears of civic leaders who were understandably concerned about the social and political impact of reform ideas in their urban centres. Others turned to spiritualism, an approach which was in many respects a familiar one in the Low Countries owing to the strength of mysticism, the *Devotio Moderna*, and similar movements of urban lay piety. Emphasizing the inner significance of religious beliefs and practices, spiritualism could find an outward home in either Catholicism or Protestantism, and sometimes both. If precise dogma was inconsequential for salvation or membership of the divinely chosen elect, then a playwright could advocate a path to salvation that shunned the divisiveness and damage of doctrinal disputes or arguments over specific cultic practices; instead, salvation was found in the correct inner disposition of the believer and adherence to a spiritual church. In spiritualism, then, many playwrights believed they had found a means to ending the religious impasse and ensuring peace and tranquillity for their communities and businesses, while at the same time pushing for a renewal of spiritual life and a greater participation in it on the part of lay people. The popularity of this approach is also attested by the developments in the intellectual and religious life of the Netherlands later in the sixteenth century and in the next, such as the rise of the Remonstrants and the Collegiant movement.<sup>54</sup> In the course of the next several decades, as the Netherlands embarked on its fateful wars against Spain, Rhetoricians continued to compose plays from this perspective, although whether spiritualism

<sup>54</sup> See Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*; Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*; H. ten Boom, *De reformatie in Rotterdam, 1530–1585* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1987), pp. 98–110; as well as the older studies by J. C. van Slee, *De Rijnsburger Collegianten* (1895; repr., Utrecht: H&S, 1980), and C. B. Hylkema, *Reformateurs: Geschiedkundige studiën over de godsdienstige bewegingen uit de nadagen onzer gouden eeuw* (1900; repr., Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis; Amsterdam: Bert Hagen, 1978).



contributed to or blunted criticism against the policies of the higher rulers remains to be seen.<sup>55</sup>

This strength of spiritualism within both Rhetoricians drama and Netherlandic religious culture brings me back to one of the points I raised at the beginning of the essay. Throughout the sixteenth century, the predominant form of serious Rhetoricians drama (and many of its comedic genres as well) became almost overwhelmingly that of the *spel van sinne*, or the play of the senses. Instead of performing roles of real or biblical personages, the actors played the parts of inner thoughts or inclinations within every person. The battle between the Vices and Virtues was therefore one that was fought, or believed to be so, within the minds of everyone in the audience. The devil, for example, was transformed from an independent, frightening (or humorous, depending on the moment) creature external to humanity to a force of evil within each human, where blame for sin was now believed to reside. As I read these plays, I am struck time and again by the parallel in development in the thought of lay reformers such as David Joris, who after the middle of the 1530s, especially after the disillusioning debacle of Münster, moved away from belief in the literal reality of apocalyptic events and personages, such as the Antichrist and the devil, to internalizing these entirely as the inner vices of individuals. As best as I have been able to determine, Joris's controversial demonology (if such it can be called) was finalized while he lived in Antwerp (1539 to 1544), from whence he and his noble patrons, the Van Lier and Van Berchem families, moved to Basel. Joris, who seems to have been born into a Bruges merchant family, was by training an artist of considerable skill. In several sources Joris's father was identified as an actor, which Joris's detractors have used to discredit his pedigree by suggesting that his father was a member of a wandering comedy troupe. I have argued that, given Joris's father's occupational standing, it is much more likely that he was associated instead with one of Bruges's thriving Rhetoricians societies. It seems entirely possible that while in Antwerp, Joris may have watched some Rhetoricians performances or read some of their published works, a suggestion that is strengthened by the fact that one of Antwerp's Rhetoricians Chambers (*De Violieren*,

<sup>55</sup> One of the most prominent writers of verse, drama, and commentary in the second half of the sixteenth century was Dirk Volckertsz. Coornhert (1522–90), a prominent spiritualist and advocate of religious toleration. See H. Bongers, *Leven en werk van Dirk Volckertsz Coornhert* (Amsterdam: G. A. van Oorschot, 1978). For Mennonites and drama, see esp. Piet Visser, *Broeders in de geest: De doopsgezinde bijdragen van Dierick en Jan Philipsz. Schabaelje tot de nederlandse stichtelijke literatuur in de zeventiende eeuw*, 2 vols (Deventer: Sub Rosa, 1988).

The Gillyflower) was attached to the St Luke's artists' guild. Moreover, Joris occasionally wrote in *rederijkers* style, such as a number of spiritual songs which faithfully follow the Rhetoricians format for refrains, two of which highly praised the Dutch language.<sup>56</sup> It is my belief that Joris was therefore influenced, or at least encouraged, in his internalizing of the devil by Rhetoricians presentations of the *sinneken*.<sup>57</sup> (He may also have been influenced in this regard by the Jewish community of the city, but that awaits a more detailed study.)

In any event, Rhetoricians, speaking as they were for literate urban males, adapted reform ideas to suit their specific concerns. Only rarely did they advocate radical change that would upset the relative social stability of their communes, a stability that was essential both for the performance of their literary craft and for the prosperous pursuit of their craft or merchant businesses. Therefore, in almost every play examined here, compromises were made to soften the edge of reform rhetoric. In this climate, political peace, economic growth, and religious tolerance ranked at least as highly as the call for religious change. As very few Rhetoricians were clergy, most had a vested interest in maintaining the social and economic health of their cities, while at the same time promoting some religious change. Luther and Calvin may have regarded these accommodations to civic reality a betrayal of the Gospel message, but to urbanites of the Low Countries, there was great appeal in devising a reformation that suited the needs of their world, rather than that of the German princes or the magistracy of the South-German/Swiss cities. This explains why Rhetoricians could provoke the ire of the later Calvinist ministers, for once again their drama sought to promote a degree of religious tolerance and adjustment to social and economic realities in the face of Reformed demands for religious conformity.

<sup>56</sup> See Gary K. Waite, 'The Holy Spirit Speaks Dutch: David Joris and the Promotion of the Dutch Language, 1539–1545', *Church History*, 61(1992), 47–59. The poems are now available on-line at the Digitale bibliotheek voor de nederlandse letteren <<http://www.dbnl.nl>>.

<sup>57</sup> Gary K. Waite, 'Popular Drama and Radical Religion: The Chambers of Rhetoric and Anabaptism in the Netherlands', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 65 (1991), 227–55, esp. pp. 245–49. See also Ficheroux, 'Van helse intrigant tot toneelfiguur'.

## ‘HERESY’ IN THE PLAYS OF THE DUTCH RHETORICIANS

Wim Hüsen

### *Introduction*

Martin Luther’s violent attack on Rome’s indulgence trade was, by the time he nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of Wittenberg cathedral, by no means an unexpected event. Throughout Europe, individuals, both men of religion and scholars such as John Wycliffe (c. 1330–84), Jan Hus (c. 1372–1415), and Wessel Gansfort (c. 1419–89), and religious sects, such as the Waldensians and the ‘dissenters’ of the Free Spirit, had denounced specific dogmas and teachings of the Church long before the Augustinian friar started his crusade against Rome’s lucrative paper trade.<sup>1</sup> In the Low Countries, too, requests for reform were openly voiced. The invention of the printing press significantly enhanced communication, as a result of which dissenting views could be heard, or rather read, in every living room of every single town or village of the nation. Literary texts produced by Rhetoricians during the first half of the sixteenth century, plays in particular, do not seem to have been too appealing for publishers unless they explicitly aimed at spreading or confirming new religious insights. In play scripts, not meant for publication, authors felt perhaps more free to express their belief. To acquire a comprehensive picture of the ideas held by Rhetoricians during these years we therefore have to study their printed books as well as their manuscripts. Let us first, however, briefly glance at those few remarkable plays distributed in print.

<sup>1</sup> See chapter 1, ‘The Eve of the Reformation: Anticipations of Reform’, in Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation* (London: Longman, 1981), pp. 1–26.

An early example of a clearly dissenting voice is heard in *Van Nyeuvont, Loosheit ende Practike: hoe sy Vrou Lortse verheffen* (*The Play of New Invention, Cunning, and Deception: How they Exalt Lady Fraud*), a text published in Antwerp around the year 1500. From the outset it is obvious that its anonymous author strictly denounces the selling of indulgences. That he criticizes this particular pillar of ecclesiastical custom is probably one of the reasons why the play was printed in the first place. Yet apart from its vehement charge at this widespread activity the book also ridicules the adoration of saints by having the three characters mentioned in the title of the play invent yet another object of veneration, *Vrou Lortse*, Dame Fraud. The three men have her shrine carried around the country by two individuals who are carefully instructed to prompt 'believers' to donate money to her newly established brotherhood. Depending on the amount of money they will give, the gullible flock shall be granted a varying number of years free of punishment after death.<sup>2</sup>

During the first decades of the sixteenth century civil disobedience in matters of religion was not an exception. On 30 November 1517, barely a month after Luther had started his protest action yet before his words had reached the Low Countries, the Brussels authorities issued a decree against blasphemy, prohibiting any spiteful words against God or the Virgin Mary:

Nous [. . .] vous mandons & commettons par ces presentes [. . .] que un chascun de noz Subjectz & autres [. . .] se garde d'oresenauant de jurer, blasphemer & renuncher le nom de Dieu & de sa glorieuse Mere la vierge Marie, & de faire autre execrables & detestables Sermens, en quelque lieu que se soit.<sup>3</sup>

[We [. . .] herewith order you and enjoin [. . .] that each of our subjects or other people [. . .] will henceforth refrain from swearing and blaspheming, renouncing the name of our Lord and his glorious Mother, the Virgin Mary, or deliver, at whatever location, any horrendous or detestable sermon.]

The moment Luther's teachings became known to the western world, the Low Countries' central government immediately took action against them, while at the same time banning any individual, whoever he may be, expressing unorthodox ideas in matters of religion. Well before Luther's excommunication from the

<sup>2</sup> See *Van Nyeuvont, Loosheit ende Practike: Hoe sij Vrou Lortse verheffen*, ed. by E. Neurdenburg (Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1910). See also my essay 'The Fool as Social Critic: The Case of Dutch Rhetoricians' Drama', in *Fools and Folly*, ed. by Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), pp. 112–45 (pp. 118–22).

<sup>3</sup> See *Ordonnancien, Statuten, Edicten en Placcaten, ghepubliceert in de landen van hervvaertsoer, van vveghen der Keyserlicker ende Conijnglicker Majesteyten* (Gent, 1559), p. 37.

Catholic Church in the Worms Edict (8 May 1521), which condemned his reform movement as heretical, individuals possessing copies of his writings were in severe danger of being prosecuted. The first public book burning took place in Leuven as early as 8 October 1520.<sup>4</sup> Similar events in other towns would follow soon. In Gent his books were destroyed, on 25 July 1521, in the presence of Emperor Charles V and the papal legate, Hieronymus Aleander (1480–1542), the Pope's official representative at Worms.<sup>5</sup> Two years later, on 1 July 1523, the first Dutch Lutherans, two Augustinian friars, Hendrik Vos and Johan van Essen, ended their lives at the stake.

The Worms Edict not only termed the Wittenberg monk's deviations of the ecclesiastical doctrines as erroneous and fallacious but, explicitly, also as 'heresy'. The Dutch translation of the document has the word *ketterien*,<sup>6</sup> an expression which henceforth will, so it seems, have one single meaning: a reprehensible deviation from the official teachings of the Church inspired by reformers such as Martin Luther, Menno Simons, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and others trying to cleanse the Church of its non-scriptural excrescences. However, the nouns 'heresy' and 'heretic' — in medieval Dutch *heresie* and *heretiker* or, derived from the name of the sect of the Cathars, *ketterie* and *ketter* — did not merely refer to the various protestant dissenters active after 1517. In Dutch Rhetoricians drama in particular it would have, as we will see in this essay, a different meaning.

Throughout the first half of the sixteenth century the authorities would label offenders as *luthersch* and their belief as *lutherie* yet without explicitly denoting them to be followers of Luther. In the Low Countries it is not until after the 1560s that dissenters can be readily termed Lutheran or Calvinist. The Anabap-

<sup>4</sup> See A. F. Mellink, 'Prereformatie en vroege reformatie 1517–1568', in *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, ed. by P. J. Blok and others (Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1977–83), VI (1979), 146–65 (p. 147). This essay — as well as J. Decavele's on 'Reformatie en begin katholieke restauratie 1555–1568', pp. 166–85 — provides a succinct insight into the spread of the Reformation in the Low Countries during the first half of the sixteenth century. The best introduction to this topic in English is by Alastair Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* (London: Hambledon, 1990). The religious position of the Dutch Rhetoricians has recently been discussed by Gary K. Waite, *Reformers on Stage: Popular Drama and Religious Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515–1556* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> See W. Waterschoot, 'De rederijkerskamers en de doorbraak van de reformatie in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden', *Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Soevereine Hoofdkamer van Retorica 'De Fonteyne' te Gent*, 45–46 (1995–96), 141–53 (p. 142).

<sup>6</sup> *Ordonnancien*, p. 89.

tists, inspired by Melchior Hoffmann (c. 1500–43) or David Joris (c. 1501–56), were by far the most outspoken representatives of a closely defined sect. Unlike the situation in Denmark, Sweden, and most of the German states where Luther's teachings received early acceptance, Dutch protestantism created its own variations during the first half of the century. Consequently, it has been labelled Erasmian, sacramentarian, and humanist. Perhaps Zwingli's theology exerted a larger impact on early protestantism in the Low Countries than any other religious sect.<sup>7</sup> Of course, the authorities published numerous decrees against deviations from the old religion, but they were massively ignored. In 1522, Emperor Charles V therefore appointed an inquisitor, but as a result of a juridical joust between the States of Holland and governess Margaret of Austria (1480–1530) this imperial official had to step down within a year. Two years later Pope Clement VII nominated three inquisitors in his place.<sup>8</sup> During the second half of the century the religious climate in the Netherlands radically changed with, on the one hand, the dissenters becoming more unyielding in their faith that eventually crystalized out in Calvinism and, on the other hand, the central authorities no longer tolerating any other religion but Roman Catholicism.

Throughout the sixteenth century Rhetoricians played a significant role in religious discussions. An official ban against their activities at large was issued on 26 January 1560 limiting their freedom of movement nationwide and prohibiting them, among other things, from bringing out plays not inspected prior to their performance. Margaret of Parma (1522–86) ordered the civic authorities that they should

verbieden ende interdiceren eenenyegelijck, van wat state, qualiteyt oft conditie hij zij, vuytlander oft ondersate, hem voirtaen te vervoirderen eenichsins te divulgeren, singen oft spelen, doen divulgeren, singen oft spelen int openbaer, in geselschap oft int heymelijck eenige camerspelen, baladen, liedekens, commedien, batementen, refereynen oft andere diergelijcke schrifften van wat materien ende in wat tale die soudén mogen wesen, zoewel oude als nyeuwe, daerinne gemenght zijn eenige questien, propositien oft materien beroerende onse religie oft geestelijcke luyden, tzij aengaende huere persoenen oft staten.<sup>9</sup>

[prohibit and interdict anyone, of whatever status, quality, or condition he may be, foreigner or citizen, henceforth to venture to divulge, sing, or play, or cause to divulge, sing, or play in public, in private or secretly any play, ballad, song, comedy, refrain, or

<sup>7</sup> See Mellink, 'Prereformatie en vroege reformatie', p. 151.

<sup>8</sup> Mellink, 'Prereformatie en vroege reformatie', pp. 148–49.

<sup>9</sup> See *Recueil des Ordonnances des Pays-Bas, deuxième série: 1506–1700, Règne de Philippe II*, ed. by Le Vicomte Terlinden and J. Bolsée, 2 vols (Brussels: C.A.D., 1957–78), II (1978), 50–51.

similar writing in whatever language, both old and new, in which any matter, proposition, or material is included touching upon our religion or on our religious dignitaries, whether related to their personalities or their status.]

Even though this decree was ignored on a wide scale it must have caused a change in the relative freedom the Rhetoricians had enjoyed thus far. Until then they had only been obliged to have their plays and refrains scrutinized for possible inclusion of anti-Catholic statements by local priests. After 1560, in practice performing drama was, by definition, regarded as a crime, regardless of the play's contents. Perhaps this tempted authors to include more subversive remarks than they would have done under normal circumstances. After all, by having their play performed they were already punishable so why not make the strongest possible statement? Let us therefore concentrate on the period prior to this year, 1560, when most Rhetoricians will have found it wise to be relatively cautious, and study in greater detail what role they played in the religious discussions of the day.

### *Rhetoricians and the Reformation until 1560*

Rhetoricians plays were not primarily performed because of their aesthetic values but because they enabled authors to present their ideas on religion and moral behaviour to a wide audience. In the vehement religious discussions of the day the position of a sixteenth-century playwright was difficult and dangerous. For on the one hand he would want to provide his audience with statements that were meant to be as unambiguous as possible, yet on the other hand he knew that the 'enemy' could be amongst his listeners. Many writers and publishers were questioned about their views by civic or state authorities, and some even lost their lives at the stake or were beheaded for their anti-Catholicism.<sup>10</sup> Thus the Antwerp teacher Pieter Scuddematte was sentenced to death on 10 May 1547. A contemporary chronicle described him as 'een fraey Rethoriseen' (an able Rhetorician) and as the reason for his conviction, 'om dat men hem opleye eenige ketterye' (because he was accused of some heresy).<sup>11</sup> On 4 January 1558, Frans Fraet, the author of a play called *Een present van Godt Loondt* (*A Gift Play*

<sup>10</sup> According to A. L. E. Verheyden, *Het Brugsche Martyrologium* (12 October 1527 – 7 August 1573) (Brussels: Wilco, 1944), p. 24, the punishment for Anabaptists consisted of being burned at the stake. Lutherans were beheaded. Calvinists could receive either of the two punishments. Women were drowned.

<sup>11</sup> See *Chronycke van Antwerpen sedert het jaer 1500 tot 1575* [. . .] (Antwerpen: Van Dieren, 1843), p. 45.

of 'May God Reward You'), written before 1553, was beheaded.<sup>12</sup> The man was also known as the translator of Guillaume de La Perrière's emblem book, *Le theatre des bons engins* (1536–39), published in 1554 by one of his Antwerp colleagues, Jacob van Liesveldt, under the title *Tpalays der gheleerder ingienen*. Fraet's play betrays a reformational attitude in that the three characters, representing a Fleming, a Frenchman, and a Spaniard, carry the same present: a castle, a stronghold, and a mansion, all signifying God and His Word, the Bible. However, not for having written this play but because of his activities as a printer Fraet, after having been found guilty of bringing out books the publication of which had been prohibited in lists issued in 1546 and 1550, was decapitated.<sup>13</sup>

Public interest in the products of the Rhetoricians, their *refreinen* and *spelen van sinne* in particular, was huge in the Low Countries, especially during the first half of the sixteenth century. At least four different editions of the (in)famous Gent plays, written on the question *Welc den mensche stervende meesten troost es* (What is the greatest consolation for man dying), were printed before the end of 1539, the year in which their public performance took place. In 1564, a fifth edition of this collection was published in Wesel, a northern German town on the Rhine where large groups of Dutch and Flemish dissenters had taken refuge. Even during the first half of the seventeenth century there was a distinct interest in these plays, judging by a manuscript containing a selection of twelve of the nineteen Gent plays. It once belonged to Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687), one of Holland's most eminent poets of his time and an ardent Calvinist. In or about 1545, a school master from the Flemish town of Ypres, Joannes de Reepere, assigned one of his pupils the task of copying a number of refrains and morality plays, all of which, according to the archival record from which this information is derived, were full of error and heresy.<sup>14</sup> Equally popular were plays such as *Een*

<sup>12</sup> *Chronycke*, p. 55; L. Roose, 'De Antwerpse hervormingsgezinde rederijker Frans Fraet', *Jaarboek 'De Fonteyne'*, 19–20 (1969–70), 95–107 (p. 97). The refrain and the play were edited by L. Roose, 'Het refrein en het presentspel van Frans Fraet', *Jaarboek 'De Fonteyne'*, 25 (1975), part 1, 119–40.

<sup>13</sup> See for this aspect of his life especially Paul Valkema Blouw, 'The Van Oldenborch and Vanden Merberghe Pseudonyms or Why Frans Fraet Had to Die', *Quaerendo*, 22 (1992), 165–90, 245–72.

<sup>14</sup> See Johan Decavele, 'Jan Utenhove en de opvoering van het zinnespel te Roborst in 1543', *Jaarboek 'De Fonteyne'*, 39–40 (1989–90), 101–45, quoting from records in the Brussels 'Algemeen Rijksarchief': 'eenen pampieren geschreven bouck [. . .], vul spelen van syne, refeinen ende balladen, inde welcke diversche passagen stonden vul dwaelyngen ende heresien, merckelick een spel van synne by den selven placcaete by expressen verboden' (p. 101).



*spel van sinnen op tderde, twierde, ende twyfde capittel van Dwerck der Apostelen* (*An allegorical play about the third, fourth and fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles*), of which six editions appeared in print between c. 1540 and 1608,<sup>15</sup> and *Den Boom der Schrifthuere* (*The Tree of Scriptures*) with five editions over the same time span.<sup>16</sup> A characteristic common to all collections and plays mentioned so far is the influence of the Reformation on the wording of the texts, and this was precisely the reason why these texts were printed.

Although it took until about 1566 (the year in which the *Beeldenstorm* or iconoclastic fury swept over most of the Low Countries) before Protestantism developed into clearly discernible movements — Anabaptism being the earliest reformational development taking a readily identifiable religious position — it is nevertheless possible to surmise whether individual authors sympathized with reformatory trends or not. To this end a common denominator has been suggested in the word 'Lutherizing', an expression denoting any shift away from orthodox Catholicism. It is the great merit of J. B. Drewes (1907–94) to have shown in a seminal article on the interpretation of religious morality plays that many phrases and words in Rhetoricians plays indeed reveal this Lutherizing attitude adopted by their authors. Very few of them can be labelled pure Lutherans or Calvinists, but it is possible to refer to them as Lutherizing. However this may be, we will always have to remember that because these plays are no theological treatises but dramas we cannot expect to find statements in them with the same degree of transparency or precision as may be found in scholarly discourse.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica: Geschriften uit den tijd der Hervorming in de Nederlanden*, ed. by S. Cramer and F. Pijper, vol. 1: *Polemische geschriften der hervormingsgezinden* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1903), pp. 282–83; based on the typeface, Valkema Blouw identified the edition mentioned in W. Nijhoff and M. E. Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche bibliographie van 1500 tot 1540* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1919–), no. 1924, as a product of Frans Fraet's press.

<sup>16</sup> See Nijhoff and Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche bibliographie*, nos 427 and 2549; P. J. Meertens, *Letterkundig leven in Zeeland in de zestiende en de eerste helft der zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1943), p. 133, n. 53. One of the editions of this play (NK 427) was printed by a certain Nic. van Oldenborch, a fictitious impressum used by various Antwerp printers, among them Frans Fraet. Adriaen van Berghen was the first printer to use this name in 1531. See Valkema Blouw, 'Van Oldenborch and Vanden Merberghe Pseudonyms'.

<sup>17</sup> See J. B. Drewes, 'Het interpreteren van godsdienstige spelen van zinne', *Jaarboek 'De Fonteyne'*, 29 (1978–79), part 1, 5–124.

### *A Remarkable Year: 1539*

The most recent editor of the nineteen *spelen van sinne* performed in Gent between 12 and 23 June 1539, B. H. Ern , characterized five plays in this collection as reformational, those staged by Rhetoricians from Nieuwkerke, Antwerp, Brussels, Edinge, and Deinze. These plays differ from the other fifteen in that, without internal confusion, a new course is being advocated or its inception is already being established ('[dat] zonder innerlijke verwarring een nieuwe koers wordt bepleit of het begin ervan al wordt vastgesteld').<sup>18</sup> J. B. Drewes is more cautious in his characterization of the Gent plays. Determination of the reformational nature of a play very often hinges, according to the author, on an inaccurate linguistic interpretation, together with a lack of understanding of how biblical texts were used in religious discourse.<sup>19</sup> For this we should carefully scrutinize the texts of the plays and judge them exclusively on the basis of what unambiguous information they offer.

The word *ketterye* (heresy) is found only once in the nineteen plays. This is, of course, by no means surprising for the authors of the plays would not readily have termed their own opinions as such. Rather, those who were convinced of the righteousness of their own position would instead call their opponent's views heretical. Thus, for example, the author of the dinner play of *Die Menichfuldicheit des Bedrochs* (*Fraud's Recurrence*), a text published in about the same year as the Gent plays, in which a character *Oerspronck der Sonden* (Origin of Sins) states:

Alle die om ghewin nae officie staen  
Dese sijn ouergegeuen plaen, om ketters te worden.<sup>20</sup>

[All those who, for reasons of financial profit, aspire a religious office are clearly bound to become heretics.]

Hence words like *ketter* and *ketterye* could be used, as we will see in the following pages, in very different ways. The way it was used in the Edinghe play of the Gent competition is ironical in that *De Mensche* (Man) says he refuses to read the Bible too often because those who have taken up the habit of doing so are in his opinion true heretics:

<sup>18</sup> *De Gentse Spelen van 1539*, ed. by B. H. Ern  and L. M. van Dis, 2 vols ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1982), 1, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Drewes, 'Het interpreteren van godsdienstige spelen van zinne', p. 75.

<sup>20</sup> *Polemische geschriften der hervormingsgezinden*, ed. by Cramer and Pijper, p. 382.

Ic hoore misse, vesperen, vouch en spade;  
 Ic volghe goet ronts mijn ouderen pade;  
 Veil schriften te lezen stellic by zye,  
 Tdijnt my ketterye, ic en wil niet dolen.<sup>21</sup>

[I attend Mass and vespers, early and late; I simply follow my parents' track; I put aside reading a lot in the scriptures, to me it seems heresy, I do not want to err.]

The play from Edinghe has been characterized by various scholars as reformational, Lutherizing, or even Lutheran.<sup>22</sup> Man's statement about heresy resembles similar passages in *Tspel van de Cristenkercke* (*The Play of the Christian Church*) by Reynier Pouwelsz. In the prologue to this play, probably written before 1540,<sup>23</sup> a character called *Garen tbest willen weten* (Desires to Know the Best) complains about the fact that, even though people stress the importance of reading the Scriptures, there are at least two ways of doing so. He asks a theologian named *Uprecht scriftuerlijck bewijs* (Sincere Scriptural Proof) to instruct him. The man warns him there are many who read the Bible yet without learning anything from it:

Hoort, mijn vrient. De sulcke hem veel beroemt,  
 die welcke nochtans een lantaeren sonder licht blijft  
 ende altijt lesende slichter dan slicht blijft,  
 totter gherechter kennisse niet gherakende  
 doer pertije ende niet naden gheest smakende,  
 noch oock nader waerheyt, na Cristus rapoort.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *De Gentse Spelen*, ed. by Ern  and Van Dis, II, 576.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, L. M. van Dis, *Reformatorische rederijkersspelen uit de eerste helft van de zestiende eeuw* (Haarlem: Vijlbrief, 1937), pp. 40, 84–85; *De Gentse Spelen*, ed. Ern  and Van Dis, II, 572–73, calling it the most explicit and intrusive of all nineteen plays; and Drewes, 'Het interpreteren van godsdienstige spelen van zinne', pp. 17–21.

<sup>23</sup> The first editor of the play, G. A. Brands, was convinced that by writing this text Pouwelsz was trying to cleanse himself of heretical suspicion and to prove he was a loyal Catholic, after he had been interrogated and fined on 10 November 1540 for having bound and sold a libellous booklet. Consequently, he dated it as 'not long after 1540'. See *Tspel van de Cristenkercke*, ed. by G. A. Brands (Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1923), pp. xxi–xxiii. In more recent years his views have been contested by Drewes, 'Het interpreteren van godsdienstige spelen van zinne', pp. 6–14, and Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, pp. 121–25. However, according to Waite, Pouwelsz's 'subtle presentation of reform rhetoric' prevented him from being given no severer punishment by the authorities than 'a slap on the wrist' (p. 125). Below we will argue that Pouwelsz's play was anything but subtle. If Reinier Pouwelsz, the man convicted on 10 November 1540, can be identified as the author of this play, this conviction may not only be seen as a probable *terminus post quo* for the writing of it, but it even suggests that it was written well before 1540.

<sup>24</sup> See *Cristenkercke*, ed. by Brands, pp. 4–5.

[Listen, my friend. Many people boast [about their knowledge] but they resemble a lantern without a lamp and while reading continually remain more simple than simple, due to different views not arriving at true knowledge, not even attempting to grasp the spirit or the truth, in accordance with Christ's demands.]

Even more bold is a remark near the end of the play where *Selfs Goetduncken* (Thinks Highly of Himself), son of *Ketterije* (Heresy), thinks of heretics as 'ghecapt, ghescoren, sonder verstand altijt lesende in boecken' (hooded, cleanly shaved, without any power of comprehension reading books),<sup>25</sup> whether wearing a hood or with tonsure, always reading books without properly understanding them. The latter phrase evidently blatantly criticizes the clergy. Other passages also attest to Lutherizing feelings on behalf of its author, Drewes explained.<sup>26</sup> There are even reasons to believe that the play is truly and purely Lutheran as we will argue below.

How central the concept of heresy is to this play may be gathered from the frequency with which words such as *ketterye* or *heresy*e and their derivatives appear. In the first place the word refers to the name of *Selfs Goetduncken's* mother, without any hesitation described by the son as 'an old bitch', but she is not yet 'burnt-out' ('de oude hoere, mer onversleten'; line 2337). The name of *Selfs Goetduncken's* father is no less flattering: *Upgeblasen valsche vermeten* (Bloated Wicked Venture). *Selfs Goetduncken* is dressed as a knight, on his head a prelate's bonnet and around his neck a scarf. In the play he is the only character who can be readily identified as a religious person. A remarkable aspect of the play is that it does not recognize the value of the Apostles' Creed. *Uprecht scriftuerlick bewijs* argues that even Satan believes in it: 'Die ghelooft die duvel oeck wel' (line 154). The traditional Christian works of mercy are useful because God only looks at man's faith, he adds (lines 222–24). The play's central action consists of *Selfs Goetduncken's* seduction of *Uprecht simpel gheloven* (Sincere Simple Faith), daughter of *De Cristelijcke Kercke* (The Christian Church), who used to be wooed by *Tminnende Herte* (The Loving Heart), personification of Christ himself. Mistaking *Selfs Goetduncken* for the latter, *Uprecht simpel gheloven* accepts his invitation to accompany him to an inn named 'Tophet', to be found 'in ernous dellinghe' (line 960).<sup>27</sup> Thoroughly enjoying herself there the girl at first

<sup>25</sup> *Cristenkercke*, ed. by Brands, p. 100.

<sup>26</sup> '[H]ier spreekt de moderne, lutheraniserende theologie' (Here the modern, Lutherizing theology speaks; Drewes, 'Het interpreteren van godsdienstige spelen van zinne', p. 14).

<sup>27</sup> Topheth was in the Old Testament the name for a place, located in the valley of Hinnom ('ernous dellinghe'), where children were sacrificed to Moloch. It was defiled by Josiah as part of his campaign to destroy idolatry in Judah. See II Kings 23. 10.

turns a deaf ear to the advice of a passing watchman, *Scriftuerlijcke Hoede* (Scriptural Guard), who warns people to keep an eye on their open fires. Not before the man has told her that by following this path of wickedness as a result of which she will never be able to be restored to favour with *Tminnende Herte* does she show remorse. Drawing her attention to his lantern, named *Kennisse der Sonden* (Knowledge of Sins; line 1534), *Scriftuerlijcke Hoede* advises her to return to her retreat, *Die Vrese Goeds* (Fear of God; line 1604). Meanwhile *Tminnende Herte* has lost his interest in *Uprecht simpel gheloven*. The girl's mother tries to persuade him to change his mind and in her support *Scriftuerlijcke Hoede* reminds him of his own words:

Ick sal metter vlijt // v tot mij coenlick nemen  
 ende alle valsche herders zal ick verlemen,  
 en van v vervremen // der dwalinghen smerte,  
 en gheuen v herders goet, na mijn selfs herte,  
 die door die werte // des gheests ghesoghen // hebben.  
 dese sullen v, soe ick haer sal betoghen // hebben  
 voeden in sciencie en doctrijne // soet.<sup>28</sup>

[I will peacefully and diligently accept you, maim all false shepherds, remove from you the pain of fallacy and entrust good shepherds to you, after my own heart, who have suckled from the spirit's breast. These will nourish you with sweet knowledge and doctrine.]

It is only after hearing these words that *Tminnende Herte* gives in and accepts *Uprecht simpel gheloven* again as his bride. Here we have reached a pivotal place in the play for it is this passage that seems to make it purely Lutheran. Reading the Bible was, according to the Wittenberg reformer, futile as long as the reader was not guided by the Holy Spirit himself: 'for nobody understands these precepts unless it is given him from above. [. . .] Therefore they most sadly err who presume to interpret the Holy Scriptures and the law of God by taking hold of them by their own understanding and study.'<sup>29</sup> This central concept in Luther's teachings is also central to the play. Hence the exclamation of *Garen tbest willen weten* in the prologue where he expresses his utter confusion regarding the various factions all stressing the importance of reading the Bible: 'sy roupen beij, scrift, scrift' (both cry, 'Writ, Writ'; line 78). *Uprecht scriftuerlick bewijs*'s reply, quoted above ('Hoort, mijn vrient. De sulcke hem veel beroemt', etc.), and his condemnation of those who read the Bible without attaining knowledge are cast

<sup>28</sup> *Cristenkercke*, ed. by Brands, p. 88.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in translation by Reardon, *Religious Thought*, p. 68.

in metaphors revealing the foolishness of relying on the Letter without the Spirit: they are like a lantern without a light ('een lantaeren sonder licht'; line 91), dangerously sailing without a pilot or a ship's captain ('seylende verbaest sonder pijloot oft patroon'; line 99), not tasting the Spirit ('niet naden gheest smakende'; line 94). Heresy therefore occurs in those who try to entice the children of the Church away from the Letter *and* the Spirit.<sup>30</sup> There is one category of heretics in particular, the Roman Catholics, who do their utmost in this respect, the anonymous playwright claims in a far from 'subtle',<sup>31</sup> perhaps even openly Lutheran way.

A play traditionally seen as an example of a text in which heresy is associated with the Protestant movement is Cornelis Everaert's *Spel van den Wyngaert* (*Play of the Vineyard*). Once again the word *ketterye* figures dominantly in this play. We will show, however, that that word is anything else but a direct reference to Lutheran heresy here.

### *Everaert's Spel van den Wyngaert*

Cornelis Everaert (c. 1480–1556) is a difficult person to fathom. He lived in a town in which, during the first half of the sixteenth century, only few religious disruptions took place. Although the first Lutheran books were burnt in Bruges as early as the year 1521 and the first Lutheran ended his life at the stake six years later, the town never played a central role in the Dutch religious revolt. The execution here of seven more disciples of the German reformer would follow between 1531 and 1553. In the 1530s a small number of Anabaptists, all of them refugees from other cities, also died in Bruges for their belief. The first Calvinist to pay with his life for his newly adopted religion may have been a certain Hubrecht de Drucker who died in 1552. But on the whole, during Cornelis Everaert's lifetime the citizens of Bruges were relatively remote from religious

<sup>30</sup> The emphasis on the Spirit as the sole guiding force to understand the Letter is not unique to Luther's theology. It is also present in the teachings of David Joris who, in 1537, published a tract against the Strasburg Melchiorites in which he expressly claimed, 'the Word of God is not to be composed or comprehended with ink, letter or pen, but only through the Spirit'. See Gary K. Waite, *David Joris and Dutch Anabaptism 1524–1543* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), p. 129. Waite concludes from these words: 'Regardless of their beauty, all interpretations of the Scripture not inspired by the Spirit were damned by God' (p. 129).

<sup>31</sup> Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, p. 125.

clamour and few would have felt a strong compulsion to turn their backs on the Catholic Church.

Everaert's collection of thirty-five plays reflects Bruges's relatively relaxed atmosphere. Occasionally he criticized the clergy, commonly employing the usual arguments. The fool in his *Spel vanden Nyeuwen Priestere* (*Play of the New Priest*), for example, critically observes, 'Al zietmense leeden / een leuen confuus. || Se houden daghelicx / met vrouwen huus || Oft ghehuwede lieden waren / als wyf of man'<sup>32</sup> (Even though one sees them lead an innocent life, they have a joint household with women, as if, husband and wife, they are a married couple). A play traditionally seen as his most anti-Lutheran in spirit is *Tspel van den Wyn-gaert* (*The Play of the Vineyard*), dating back to 1534. It dramatizes the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20. 1–16). In the Prologue Everaert expresses his aversion to *ketterye*, which he calls a 'Lazarussche sonde' (Lazarian sin). W. J. C. Buitendijk explains the word 'Lazarussche' as 'melaats',<sup>33</sup> leprous, hence referring to another parable, the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16. 19–31). Heresy may indeed have been seen as a kind of leprosy, but this does not account for the reason why Everaert should have used this particular expression. We will return to this passage later. The text further identifies the vineyard as the faith of the Christian church. In it one finds many who can see and hear but refuse to do so. In the play, the author has them appear as semi-allegorical characters named *Ziende Blende* (Seeing Blind) and *Hoorende Doof* (Hearing Deaf). Their names are taken from Matthew 13. 13: 'because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not'. The two represent a 'ruter vander banc' (knight of the bench, meaning a vagabond-like person with a predilection for taverns<sup>34</sup>) and a 'vraukin vanden gheduene'. The epithet 'vanden gheduene' remains rather enigmatic. Some see the woman as a prostitute but Drewes, who provides a lengthy discussion of the meaning of the expression, refuses to accept this suggestion. However this may be, they are both much more interested in perpetrating evil than in practicing any virtue: 'Wy zyn juuste / van eender condicie || Meer gheneghen

<sup>32</sup> See *Spelen van Cornelis Everaert*, ed. by J. W. Muller and L. Scharpé (Leiden: E. J. Brill, [1898]–1920), p. 430. See also my new edition of these plays, *De Spelen van Cornelis Everaert*, 2 vols (Hilversum: Verloren, 2005), II, 818.

<sup>33</sup> See W. J. C. Buitendijk, *Het Calvinisme in de spiegel van de Zuidnederlandse literatuur der Contra-reformatie* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1942), p. 112, n. 4.

<sup>34</sup> Jos Houtsma, 'Ruyters in het Antwerps Liedboek', *De nieuwe taalgids*, 74 (1981), 48–52, discusses the meaning of the word as it is used in the famous Antwerp Songbook of 1544, hence a work contemporary to Everaert's play.

/ tot sondeghe malicie || Dan tot duechdelic werc' (We are exactly in the same condition: more inclined to sinful malice than to virtuous work; lines 156–58). Besides that, they prefer laziness over being weary of work. Occasionally, they join repenting sinners visiting monasteries outside the city walls where they will obtain remission for their crimes. However, the reason why they do this is because they regard this journey as a pleasant outing rather than a pilgrimage.

Everaert diverts from his biblical source by having *Ziende Blende* and *Hoorende Doof* invited to work in the vineyard by *dUpperste Mueghenthey*t (The Supreme Power) himself, while escorted by his steward *Duechdelic Vermaen* (Virtuous Warning). The three Labourers hired first represent the three estates. One of them, symbolizing the clergy, is called *Voorgaende Bewys* (Former Proof), a character with a clear predilection for the Old Testament. When finally all five receive the same amount of money in remuneration for their work, the penny here representing eternal life ('Dats teeuwich leven'; line 724), the first-come Labourers protest at the unequal level of payment. *dUpperste Mueghenthey*t retorts that none will receive their penny for their labour or in reward for their work. He stresses the fact that it is merely his Grace to which they owe their money. Although this is a Lutherizing point of view, the ensuing discussion underlines the value and virtue of labour, occasionally described as 'duechdelic werck' (virtuous work, i.e., perhaps, works of mercy; line 690). In the end the two conflicting opinions are reconciled in a solution which may be typical for Everaert's own hesitant position at the time when he wrote this play. Until only a few years before a loyal Catholic, he now apparently acknowledges the value of certain Lutheran views.<sup>35</sup> This, I think, made him agree with both camps, perhaps without really seeing the immense difference underlying the two approaches:

[VROOM LABUER]

Sy wierden ghehelicht huut huerlieder ghewercken  
Die voor Gods / gheboorte waeren.

HOORENDE DOOF

Maer de heydenen ende wy sondaeren

<sup>35</sup> According to Drewes, 'Het interpreteren van godsdienstige spelen van zinne', p. 74, references to God's grace are essential to both fifteenth- and sixteenth-century theology and piety. Only in combination with Luther's doctrine of justification through faith do references to God's mercy become a Protestant tool. Since the latter is categorically lacking in Everaert's works, the author cannot, still according to Drewes, be suspected of showing any reformist sympathy. For us, however, it is significant enough to see how much Everaert stresses salvation through God's grace as opposed to 'verdiente van wercke' (works' merit) in lines 580–85.



Leuende jnder ketyfueghe / sondeghe aermicheyt  
Syn ghehelicht / duer Gods ontfaermicheyt.<sup>36</sup>

[[PIOUS LABOUR:] They who lived before God's (i.e. Christ's) birth were sanctified through their works.

HEARING DEAF: But the heathens and we, sinners, living in evil malignant poverty are sanctified through God's mercy.]

Most scholars interpret the fact that Everaert explicitly turned himself in this play against *ketterye* (heresy) as proof of his loyalty to the Catholic Church. Those who do not work hard enough in the vineyard of the Church — heretics in the first place — are to be blamed for the present bad state of the garden. The question is, however, whether Everaert aimed at Lutherans or Anabaptists when he blamed the *ketters* (heretics). In Bruges the word *ketter* appears to have had a remarkable additional meaning when Everaert wrote this play, for it was apparently also used to refer to the religious order of the mendicant friars. Throughout the sixteenth century, they were described there as *putiers* (vagabond), *slupers* (slyboots), and *bouven* (scoundrels) but above all as *ketters*: 'esse religiosos haereticos'.<sup>37</sup> This explains why Everaert called *ketterye* a 'Lazerussche sonde', for even though Lazarus 'was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom' (Luke 16. 22), as a beggar he was still to be blamed for his idleness.<sup>38</sup> The ambiguity of the word *ketterye*, confusingly brought about by Everaert, allows us to view the play from a different perspective. Since it is in the end not good deeds which ultimately save mankind — the author emphasizes that God's grace is the only means of salvation and in addition to that, as we have seen, possibly even deliberately attacking the order of the mendicant friars — the play reveals features of a

<sup>36</sup> *Spelen van Cornelis Everaert*, ed. by Muller and Scharpé, p. 518. See also my edition, II, 965.

<sup>37</sup> See for the word *ketter* as an invective used for the mendicant friars A. Dewitte, 'Chronologie van de reformatie te Brugge en in het Brugse Vrije (1485–1593)', in *Brugge in de Geuzentijd: Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van de Hervorming te Brugge en in het Brugse Vrije tijdens de 16de eeuw* (Bruges: Werkgroep Herdenkingsbundel: Westvlaamse Gidsenkring, 1982), pp. 34–44 (p. 34).

<sup>38</sup> The distinction was found in the works of Gerhoch von Reichersberg. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries intense discussions took place on how to decide who would be seen as an 'honest' or a 'dishonest' beggar after Gratian had approached the issue in his *Concordia Discordantium canonum* or, as it was subsequently called, *Decretum Gratiani*. See Bronisław Geremek, *Poverty: A History*, trans. by Agnieszka Kolakowska (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 24–25, and Brian Tierney, 'The Decretists and the "Deserving Poor"', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1 (1959), 360–73.

Lutherizing intention to a much greater extent than scholarship has hitherto been prepared to accept.

Everaert's *Spel van den Wyngaert* testifies to the relatively relaxed atmosphere in the town of Bruges during the first half of the sixteenth century. During the first decades after the arrival of the Reformation in the Low Countries, the local authorities still allowed him to be open about his contempt of corrupt priests. They were far more critical towards his social criticism, targeting economic and social mismanagement in the central authorities.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps there was some religious naivety in the man, on the one hand, accepting the Lutheran view of trusting in God's grace regardless of one's works, while on the other remaining a loyal Catholic.

### *Conclusion*

Heresy in the sixteenth century was a widespread phenomenon, but as a concept to condemn dissidents it was certainly not only used by Roman Catholics. It appears that the term was especially used by those who opposed the reprehensible customs and views of the Church of Rome. In any case, the word was used to refer to many different factions and carried a much broader meaning than it received in later years, notably after the Council of Trent. But even by the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century one can find examples of the way the word 'heretic' was employed in a sense quite different from the then generally accepted meaning of the word. When, for example, the Anglican Bishop Anthony Ridd encouraged his flock to say prayers to implore God to restore Queen Elizabeth's former health, the Queen accused him of nothing less than heresy.<sup>40</sup>

Aren't there any plays before 1560 in the Netherlands then in which the word *ketterye* is clearly used in an anti-reformational sense? The Canadian historian Gary K. Waite believes that, apart from the works of Cornelis Everaert, 'only two

<sup>39</sup> Two of Everaert's plays were banned for this reason. See my essays 'Cornelis Everaert on Power and Authority', in *The Growth of Authority in the Medieval West*, ed. by Martin Gosman, Arjo Vanderjagt, and Jan Veenstra (Groningen: Forsten, 1999), pp. 241–56 (pp. 242–50), and 'Cornelis Everaert and the Community of Late Medieval Bruges', in *Drama and Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Alan Hindley (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 110–25 (pp. 117–20).

<sup>40</sup> Robert Lacey, *Robert Earl of Essex: An Elizabethan Icarus*, 2nd edn (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p. 53.

other plays vigorously defended orthodox Catholic beliefs against the advances of the Reformation'.<sup>41</sup> One of them is Reinier vanden Putte's *De Menschwerdinghe Christi* (*The Incarnation of Christ*) from about 1534.<sup>42</sup> Here the author attacks the views held by Melchior Hoffmann about Christ's purely divine nature. According to one of the characters in the play, *Eygen Vernuft* (Self Wit), the Virgin Mary had no share in his earthly shape:

So den douw in een mosselschelp — wilt dit bevroen —  
 een paerle wordt door die cracht der sonnen alleen,  
 niets niet nemende vanden schelpen onreen,  
 so is dwoort vleyss wordene, in Marya gegruyt,  
 alleen door die cracht des heyligen geest gevuyt,  
 niet nemende van Maryan dreck onplaysant.<sup>43</sup>

[In just the same way as dew in a mussel shell turns into a pearl — take this to heart — merely the result of solar energy, taking nothing from the impure shell, the word has turned into flesh, grown in Mary, fed only by the Holy Spirit's power, taking nothing from Mary's repulsive muck.]

These words regarding Christ's incarnation refer to a statement by Hoffmann who, in his turn, derived the metaphor of the pearl and the shell from Pliny.<sup>44</sup> *Eygen Vernuft* adds that the best proof of his point is the claim of Mary's virginity. Earlier in the play the two defenders of Christ's dual nature, *Geestelyck Begryp* (Spiritual Understanding) and *Schriftuerlycke Zin* (Scriptural Meaning), had reiterated the discussion, conducted by Menno Simons and Dirck Philips, on whether He was born from (*van*; lat. *de*) or out of (*uuyt*; lat. *ex*) the Virgin

<sup>41</sup> Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, p. 106. It should be clear from the above that by 1534 Everaert can no longer be termed a loyal Catholic.

<sup>42</sup> Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, p. 119. The play was edited by M. A. Krebber with an introduction by S. Voolstra as 'Een spel van sinnen van de menswerdinge Christo: Een rhetoricale bestrijding van Melchior Hoffmans menswordingsleer', *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen*, 9 (1983), 53–103. Our quotations are adapted from the facsimile edition of the original text in the extensive play collection of one of the Haarlem Chambers of Rhetoric: *Trou Moet Blijcken: Bronnenuitgave van de Boeken der Haarlemse Rederijkerskamer 'de Pellicanisten'*, ed. by W. N. M. Hüsken, B. A. M. Ramakers, and F. A. M. Schaars (Assen: Quarto, 1992), vol. II: *Boek B*, fols 15<sup>r</sup>–34<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> *Trou Moet Blijcken*, ed. by Hüsken, Ramakers, and Schaars, II, fol. 27<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> See Piet Visser, *Broeders in de geest: De doopsgezinde bijdragen van Dierick en Jan Philipsz. Schabaelje tot de nederlandse stichtelijke literatuur in de zeventiende eeuw*, 2 vols (Deventer: Sub Rosa, 1988), I, 91, quoting S. Voolstra, *Het Woord is vlees geworden: De melchioritisch-menniste incarnatieleer* (Kampen: Kok, 1982), p. 131. See also W. E. Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice from 1539–1564* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1968).

Mary, the latter phrase referring to the matter from which something is made, the former to the creator of the final product. Their opponents (representing the Catholic view) held that He was born both from and out of the Virgin.<sup>45</sup> Here the two Catholics claim, however, that 'out of' is much stronger than 'from'. So even though they seem to agree with the views of Menno and Dirck that Christ was conceived 'from' the Holy Spirit and born 'out of' the Virgin, by giving preference to 'out of' over 'from' they contradict the position taken by Hoffmann:

GEESTELYCK BEGRYP  
 'Uuyt' is veel stercker dan 'van', wilt dit versinnen,  
 voor Marya thaeren schoonste, dit doch wel smaect.  
 SCHRIFTUERLYCKE ZIN  
 'Uuyt' treft die materye daer yet uuyt wert gemaect,  
 'van' treft des werckx maeckere naeden rechten keest.  
 Dus seytmen wel: Christus is vanden heyiligen geest  
 ontfangen en geboren uuyt Marya reyn.<sup>46</sup>

[SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING: 'Out' is much stronger than 'from', mark my words, for Mary at her most beautiful, think of that!]

SCRIPTURAL MEANING: 'Out' relates to the matter out of which something is made, 'from' relates to the real creator of the work. Therefore people do say: Christ is from the Holy Spirit, received and born out of Mary, the pure.]

For obvious reasons, Reinier vanden Putte's *De Menschwerdinghe Christi* also includes a number of references to heresy and heretics. At the beginning of the play, *Doodende Letter* (Killing Letter), a woman dressed as a procuress with a book in her hands, accuses her companion *Misbruyck der Schriftueren* (Misuse of Scripture), a procurer holding an inkwell, of being the worst of all heretics. In their turn, they compare *Eygen Vernuft* and *Waenende Weten* (Thinks He Knows<sup>47</sup>) — the two Mechiorites who, later in the play, attempt to seduce *Menich Onnosel Mensch* (Many Innocent Man) and *Sempel Trouwe* (Simple Trust) to having themselves baptized by them — to Arius who, by the beginning of the 4th century AD, took the diametrically opposed position of denying

<sup>45</sup> Visser, *Broeders in de geest*, p. 91.

<sup>46</sup> *Trou Moet Blijcken*, ed. by Hüskén, Ramakers, and Schaars, II, fol. 26<sup>v</sup>. After analysing Hoffmann's use of these two prepositions Keeney, *Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought*, pp. 89–100, arrives at the same conclusion regarding their respective meaning. See Visser, *Broeders in de geest*, II, 48, n. 35.

<sup>47</sup> Waite, *Reformers on Stage*, p. 120, incorrectly translates the name of this character as 'Rejector of Knowledge'. His other translations of character names in Dutch Rhetoricians plays have been gratefully adopted by us in this essay.

Christ's divinity altogether. Their views are vehemently attacked by *Geestelyck Begryp* and *Schriftuerlycke Zin*, who, of course, describe their words and arguments as purely heretical. In conclusion, the word *ketter* is used by both sides here to condemn the other party's opinions.<sup>48</sup>

In Cornelis Everaert's works three further plays contain references to heresy: a welcome to the Dominicans on the occasion of a provincial chapter the religious order held in Bruges in 1523, *Tspel van de Wellecomme van den Predicaren int Capyttele Provinciael* (*The Play of the Welcome for the Preachers in the Provincial Capital*); a play in which the author compares the Virgin Mary to a ship, *Tspel van Maria ghecompareirt by den scepe* (*The Play of Mary compared to the Ship*); and a similar one in which she is compared to the town of Jerusalem, *Tspel van Maria ghecompareirt by de stede van Jherusalem* (*The Play of Mary compared to the City of Jerusalem*).<sup>49</sup> In the first of these plays *Brugghe* (Bruges), allegorically depicted as a knight's wife decked out with costly rings and chains, complains about the fact that the learned clergy have almost completely deserted her. *Vreidsaem Regement* (Peaceful Regimen), the town's bailiff, and *Minsaem Onderhoudt* (Loving Livelihood), an honourable citizen, try to comfort her. The former advises her to ignore the daily criticism from the heretics: 'Al hoort ghy clachten / der kettereghe drachten || By daghen en nachten / en wiltse niet achten' (Even if you hear the complaints from those heretical wretches by day and by night, don't pay attention; lines 329–30). Some people even maintain that there is hardly a difference between the erudite and the simple-minded amongst the clergy, *Brugghe* notes, whereupon *Vreidsaem Regement* retorts that those who are of this opinion obstruct virtue and, as cunning heretics ('[a]ls valsche kettters'; line 356), make the citizens revolt. When eventually the tide turns and the mes-

<sup>48</sup> The other play labelled by Waite as 'Orthodox Catholic' is *Het leven van Sintruijden* (*The Play of Saint Trudo*), one of the very few Saints plays in the Low Countries that have been preserved for posterity. The play was written between 1533 and 1558 by Christiaen Fastraets, a Dominican monk from Leuven. See J. A. Worp, *Geschiedenis van het drama en van het tooneel*, 2 vols (Groningen: Wolters, 1904–08), I (1904), 35. The play was edited by G. Kalff in *Trou Moet Blycken, tooneelstukken der zestiende eeuw* (Groningen: Wolters, 1889), pp. 81–211. Saint Trudo was a nobleman living in Liège in the seventh century who decided to become a priest in order to convert the local population to Christianity. Waite finds it 'puzzling' that Fastraets 'made no explicit reference to the Protestants' (p. 167) but could it, perhaps, be seen as an early example of avoiding anachronism? Heresy plays only a minor part in this Play of Saint Trudo.

<sup>49</sup> See *Spelen van Cornelis Everaert*, ed. by Muller and Scharpé, pp. 145–65, 327–42, and 363–76; notes on pp. 578–83, 617–19, and 622–25. See also my edition, I, 321–62, II, 645–73, and II, 704–30.

sage is heard that the Dominicans will have their annual chapter in their town, *Vreidsaem Regement* once more trivializes the impact of heresy, even though it did indeed cause some harm: 'En vreest niet al zyt ghy wat ghedeert || Der kettereghe quellynghe / weist onbedrouft' (And fear not even though you see that which does harm and do not be saddened by this heretical tormenting; lines 499–500). It is not clear whether he directs himself to the delegation from the province of Brabant when he makes this remark or to *Brugghe*. The references to heresy in this play are obviously related to the various reform movements that affected Bruges. One may have expected the author to flatter the clergy in this welcome play for the Dominicans, but he nevertheless inserted a critical remark targeting the priesthood by having a couple of beggars complain about the wealth of the priestly estate whereas they themselves suffer from cruel poverty.<sup>50</sup> In *Tspel van Maria ghecompareirt by den scepe* one of the treatments a ship needs to undergo in order to become seaworthy is to have its cracks and seams caulked with oakum. This is compared with the Holy Virgin's marriage, 'tjeggens ketters ghedeer' (against the harm of the heretics; line 407), notably to protect her from accusations by heretics. The words of *Moraal Besouck* (Moral Exhortation), a secular priest, are elaborated upon by *Scrifuerlicke Beledynghen* (Scriptural Guidance), a religious female, who states:

Thuwelic van Maria / was tgheweer  
 Tjeggens alderhande watren / der eresye  
 Daer de belofte der zuuerheyt / die Marye  
 Gode vp ghedreghen hadde bleef bedect  
 Waer of de kennesse vulmaect perfect  
 Alle eretycken / ende ketters ghebreict.<sup>51</sup>

[Mary's wedding was a shield against various types of heretical waters because the vow of purity Mary pledged to God remained a secret, the perfect knowledge of which was kept away from all heretics.]

The concept of Mary's virginity was seen as highly disturbing by the early Christians who saw Christ's divine nature questioned by heretics who acknowledged Joseph's biological paternity. By the end of the Middle Ages the idea of a true Christian marriage between Mary and Joseph including a sustained virginity in both parties was embraced, thus protecting the Virgin against accusations of

<sup>50</sup> See my essay on 'Cornelis Everaert on Power and Authority', pp. 253–55.

<sup>51</sup> *Spelen van Cornelis Everaert*, ed. by Muller and Scharpé, p. 339. See also my edition, II, 669.

precocity.<sup>52</sup> Without any further explanation the same thought relating to Mary's marriage as a safeguard against accusations by heretics is, almost in the same wording, repeated in *Tspel van Maria ghecompareirt by de stede van Jherusalem*.<sup>53</sup>

The *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (WNT) dedicates nine pages to the headwords *ketter* and *ketterij* and their respective derivatives. For both words this dictionary, the largest of its kind in the world, takes the orthodox Roman Catholic perspective as its starting point, perhaps because it concentrates mainly on texts written after the Council of Trent.<sup>54</sup> As a secondary meaning, with far fewer quotations from sources to illustrate how the words were used in that particular context, this dictionary shows that texts written by members of other religious denominations used the words *ketter* and *ketterij* as well.<sup>55</sup> The preceding pages

<sup>52</sup> See J. J. Mak, *Middeleeuwse Kerstvoorstellingen* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1948), p. 22.

<sup>53</sup> See *Spelen van Cornelis Everaert*, ed. by Muller and Scharpé, p. 339, lines 388–91, and my edition, II, 725.

<sup>54</sup> 'KETTER [. . .] I) Sedert de dertiende eeuw gelijkbeteekenend met kerkelijk-lat. *haereticus*, znw. m., dus, naar de omschrijving van dezen term door de Roomsche-Katholieke Kerk, sindsdien in het Nederlandsch de naam voor: Een gedoopt Christen die bewust en hardnekkig de leerstukken, of eenige leerstukken, of ook maar één leerstuk van de Kerk verwerpt (verg. de aanhalingen uit den R.-K. Catech.)' (HERETIC [. . .] I) Since the thirteenth century equal to ecclesiastical Latin *haereticus*, noun, hence, according to the description of this term by the Roman Catholic Church, from then onwards in Dutch the name for: A baptized Christian who, consciously and stubbornly, rejects the Church doctrines, some of the doctrines, or in some cases only one doctrine (compare the quotations from the Roman-Catholic Catechism)). See M. de Vries, L. A. te Winkel, and others, *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, 29 vols ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, [1864]–1998), VII (1926), col. 2543. 'KETTERIJ [. . .] I) Abstract en subjectief. Afwijking van de rechtzinnige leer. A) Eigenlijk, te weten met betrekking tot de leer of de belijdenis, het 'geloof', eener godsdienstige gemeenschap. 1) Bij de Roomsche-Katholieken' (HERESY [. . .] I) In its abstract and subjective sense. Departure from orthodoxy. A) In its proper sense, namely in relation to the dogmas or the creed, the 'faith', of a religious community. 1) In the Roman Catholics) (ibid., col. 2555).

<sup>55</sup> '[KETTER] [. . .] II) Met betrekking tot kerken en godsdiensten in het algemeen. Iemand die, lid van eene bepaalde godsdienstige gemeenschap, gevoelens voorstaat of dingen leert, strijdig met de alleen als rechtzinnig, zuiver, waar geldende leer –, met het rechtzinnige, zuivere, ware geloof dier gemeenschap' ([HERETIC] [. . .] II) In relation to churches and religions in general. Someone who, as a member of a certain religious community, supports feelings or teaches matters contravening dogmas held to be exclusively orthodox, pure, and true –, (contrary to) the orthodox, pure, true faith of this community) (De Vries, Te Winkel, and others, *Woordenboek*, col. 2546). '[KETTERIJ] [. . .] 2) Bij andere kerkgenootschappen of godsdienstige gemeenschappen.' ([HERESY] [. . .] 2) In other church communities or religious communities) (ibid., col. 2557).

will have shown that in the plays written by the Rhetoricians the 'secondary' meaning of the words more often than not prevailed over the 'primary'. Between 1517 and 1560 the inhabitants of the Low Countries, the members of the Chambers of Rhetoric in particular, were looking for a new religious identity, giving a meaning to the concept of heresy and referring to heretics in a way that was different from how the terms were used during the centuries before and after.



## DUTCH ALLEGORICAL THEATRE: TRADITION AND CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

Bart Ramakers

This essay is intended to give a picture of the tradition of Dutch allegorical drama in the late Middle Ages, from the widely studied *Elckerlijc* (*Everyman*), which dates from the second half of the fifteenth century, to *De Wellustige Mensch* (*The Voluptuous Man*), written in or shortly before 1551. I will also suggest a conceptual approach to this type of drama that does justice to as many aspects of it as is possible.<sup>1</sup> This approach will be guided by two concepts, allegory and argumentation, which will prove to be interlinked. They permit the inclusion of plays within the corpus of allegorical dramatic texts that are usually discussed under other categories: various *tafelspelen* (literally ‘table plays’, short comic plays performed before or during meals or special occasions), the fourteenth-century *Tspel vanden Winter ende vanden Somer* (*The Play of the Winter and the Summer*) — one of the so called *abele spelen* — and thirteenth-century didactic texts using dialogue.

Allegory is mainly connected with drama as a three-dimensional genre, that is, as theatre, through personification, which is the main dramatic use of allegory. After all, a personification is a character who literally brings to life a concept or authority, through voice, expression, gesture, costume, and — in the case of *Vanden Winter ende vanden Somer* — probably also using masks.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore,

<sup>1</sup> W. M. H. Hummelen, ‘The Drama of the Dutch Rhetoricians’, in *Everyman & Company: Essays on the Theme and Structure of the European Moral Play*, ed. by Donald Gilman (New York: AMS Press, 1989), pp. 169–92, and M. Spies, “‘Op de questye . . .’: Over de structuur van 16e-eeuwse zinnespelen”, *De nieuwe taalgids*, 83 (1990), 139–50.

<sup>2</sup> W. M. H. Hummelen, ‘Performers and Performance in the Earliest Serious Secular Plays in the Netherlands’, *Comparative Drama*, 29 (1992), 19–33 (pp. 27–28); W. M. H. Hummelen,

allegory is related to certain narrative motifs that are made visible on the stage. Not only the use of allegory is connected with this visual aspect, but also the performance of tableaux vivants,<sup>3</sup> which were very characteristic of the rhetorical drama of the *rederijkers* (Rhetoricians) and the themes and iconography of which were sometimes derived directly from painting.<sup>4</sup> The concept of argumentation can be linked to largely orally delivered text genres — sermons and disputations, to give but two examples — through the structure and composition of monologues and dialogues (i.e. everything that is said on stage). Like drama, those genres functioned within the, more or less, public oratory of the town.<sup>5</sup>

Characteristic of allegorical drama is that it is not only verbal, appealing to the ears, but also visual, appealing to the eyes. Using the relationship between word and image as a guide, insight can be gained both into the theatricality and into the cultural and social context of allegorical drama. This approach differs from the ways in which the genre is usually approached because it does not take as its starting point a dramatic prototype against which all manifestations of allegorical drama are judged (an approach that has become particularly popular outside the Netherlands).<sup>6</sup> Neither does it exclusively take the rhetorical and argumentative character of the plays as its basis.<sup>7</sup> The verbal and the visual ought to be discussed in connection with each other. They are two sides of the same coin, namely that of personification, which could be described in Jauss's words as the 'systemprägende Dominante' (the dominant factor for creating the system) of allegorical drama.<sup>8</sup> In other words: the appearance of personifications is the

'Kamerspelers: professionele tegenspelers van de rederijkers', *Oud-Holland*, 110 (1996), 117–34 (pp. 128, 132).

<sup>3</sup> W. M. H. Hummelen, 'Het *tableau vivant*, de *toog* in de toneelspelen van de rederijkers', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde*, 103 (1992), 193–222.

<sup>4</sup> B. A. M. Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren: Toneelkunst en processiecultuur in Oudenaarde tussen Middeleeuwen en Moderne Tijd* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), pp. 27–33, 351–424.

<sup>5</sup> M. Mostert, *Oraliteit* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), p. 82.

<sup>6</sup> P. J. Houle, 'A Comparative Study of the English and French Full-Scope Morality Drama' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1972); W. Helmich, *Die Allegorie im französischen Theater des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1: *Das religiöse Theater* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1976).

<sup>7</sup> Spies, "Op de questye . . .".

<sup>8</sup> H.-R. Jauss, 'Theorie der Gattungen und Literatur des Mittelalters', in H.-R. Jauss, *Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur* (Munich: Fink, 1977), 327–58 (p. 332).

most important characteristic of allegorical drama. Once again in Jauss's words, allegory creates a 'gattungshafte Struktur in selbstständiger, konstitutiver Funktion' (generic structure in an independent, constituting function).<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the argumentative character of many plays has more of an 'unselbstständige' (dependent) or 'begleitende Funktion' (supporting function). With respect to the appearance of personifications, the fact that they do sometimes argue extensively is of secondary importance: that is not the case in all plays.

### *Allegory*

The use of allegory involves representing immaterial things and relationships with (material) objects, characters, and their actions. In non-dramatic genres, the use of allegory is exclusively a matter of figurative linguistic usage, that is, of words alone. In drama, objects, characters, and actions with 'meanings' are actually made visible. The use of allegory requires intellectual effort not only on the part of the author, who must represent immaterial things and relationships using (material) objects, characters, and actions, but also on the part of the reader, who must decipher the link made by the author between the image and that which it represents.

In the context of drama, this means that the audience is not only required to watch but to listen as well, because the figurative relationships are also made clear through words, through explanation. Watching and listening to allegorical drama is, therefore, an intellectual and sometimes thoroughly cerebral exercise, all the more so because the entities represented are generally abstract theological, philosophical, or psychological concepts. Furthermore, much allegorical drama serves a didactic or moralistic purpose, since allegory is pre-eminently a didactic technique with which often extremely abstract questions of religion, morality, and attitudes to life can be visually and comprehensibly represented to a wider audience. Hence the common classification of many allegorical plays as morality plays or, in Dutch, *spelen van sinne*: plays in which a *sin* (meaning 'lesson' or 'moral') is articulated and represented.

Naturally, the characters in such plays spend most of their time orating, since rather than dramatizing a story or incident, these plays centre on dramatizing thoughts and conceptual relations, principally expressed in monologues and dialogues, although images are used too. The use of visual elements relates first and

<sup>9</sup> Jauss, 'Theorie der Gattungen und Literatur des Mittelalters', p. 332.

foremost to the appearance of personifications as such, to the costumes they wear and to the props and attributes they carry, as well as to their expressions and gestures. In the second place the use of visual elements relates to the narrative motifs and to the tableaux vivants. Thirdly they refer to the setting and use of the stage in a material sense, more generally: to the space in which the performance took place. Readers of a play must try to imagine such visual elements because they are indispensable for a proper understanding of it. After all, contemporary audiences watching a performance would see the visual elements and take them into account in arriving at their own interpretations, and playwrights and directors made conscious use of them. Allegorical drama may be relatively void of physical acts and action, and may create a general impression of being rather static, but everything one sees or witnesses is full of meaning.<sup>10</sup> The visual elements are carefully planned and precise, having both a didactic and a mnemonic function: they enable the audience to learn and to remember. That explains the attraction of dramatic allegory: it not only makes abstractions visible and comprehensible, it also makes them memorable.<sup>11</sup>

The verbal character of allegorical drama — which due to the great attention devoted by the *rederijkers* to rhyme-schemes and stanza-forms is almost a byword for verbosity — is only in small part due to the need to sketch the psyches of individual characters and their development. After all, most allegorical characters in plays are personifications of abstract concepts and are literally, but also figuratively, lifeless, as literary historians have generally (pejoratively) described them. Through words and images they demonstrate the equally abstract properties and aspects of these concepts, which are by their very nature static and unchanging (unless, of course, they actually express something that is of a changing nature). That is why in allegorical drama one does not as a rule encounter individuals —

<sup>10</sup> B. Beckerman, *Theatrical Presentation: Performer, Audience and Act* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 55.

<sup>11</sup> S. K. Hagen, *Allegorical Remembrance: A Study of 'The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man' as a Medieval Treatise on Seeing and Remembering* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990); M. J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: The Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); D. van der Poel, 'Verkleed en verbeelden', in *Hoort wonder! Opstellen voor W. P. Gerritsen bij zijn emeritaat*, ed. by B. Besamusca, F. Brandsma, and D. van der Poel, *Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen*, 70 (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000), pp. 127–31. Although Carruthers does not mention allegory as a mnemonic device, it follows from her discussion of the importance that medieval authors attached to mental images for memorizing content that allegory too must have had this function.

characters who are unique and 'one of a kind'<sup>12</sup> — although it would be difficult for a good playwright to write and create otherwise than in terms of authentic individuals and relationships, and not to provide allegorical characters with individual human or stereotypical traits. Moreover, the actors playing these roles most likely would further individualize them. In doing so, playwright and actors also made it easier for the audience to recognize and to empathize with such characters. As W. M. H. Hummelen has said, the expressive urge of the playwright must be brought into balance with his pursuit of meaning, with his endeavour to make clear the general, abstract significance of a character.<sup>13</sup> The language used by personifications is predominantly down-to-earth and referential, relating both to the characteristics and aspects of the concepts that are represented and to the theme discussed in the allegorical play, which is usually just as general and with which these concepts are connected. In this area, as well as with respect to the action of the play, the playwright can either take a more meaning-oriented or a more image-oriented approach to his work.

### *Argumentation*

The verb 'discuss' was used deliberately above because in allegorical plays, particularly those from the sixteenth century, the act of speech is often a matter of reasoning, that is, attempting to demonstrate or prove something, or make it plausible — in other words: of arguing. This brings us to the *ars retorica* or the art of rhetoric, which is aimed at presenting issues in a well-thought-out and articulated manner. The images, and certain elements in particular, can be seen as part of the rhetorical-argumentative structure of a play. Allegory too was originally a rhetorical technique. Classical rhetoric viewed it as a consistently applied and sustained metaphor.<sup>14</sup> Metaphors are tropes,<sup>15</sup> figures of speech, the use of which is classified under the third stylistic quality or virtue, the *ornatus* or embellishment.<sup>16</sup> This in turn falls under the third of the *officia oratoris* or canons

<sup>12</sup> Manfred Pfister, *Das Drama: Theorie und Analyse*, 9th edn (Munich: Fink, 1997), p. 245.

<sup>13</sup> W. M. H. Hummelen, *De sinneken in het rederijersdrama* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1958), p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> A. D. Leeman and A. C. Braet, *Klassieke retorica: Haar inhoud, functie en betekenis* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff / Forsten, 1987), p. 107.

<sup>15</sup> Leeman and Braet, *Klassieke retorica*, p. 104.

<sup>16</sup> Leeman and Braet, *Klassieke retorica*, p. 102.

of rhetoric, namely *elocutio* or style.<sup>17</sup> The classical rhetorical view of allegory was spread during the Middle Ages as well, through *trivium* education — particularly through instruction in grammar — and found its way into the *artes predicandi* and *artes versificatoria*, medieval textbooks for the writing of sermons and (didactic) poetry.<sup>18</sup>

The environment in which *artes predicandi* were written and widely used was that of medieval cathedral schools and universities. The style of argumentation that was recommended and predominantly used for sermons within these clerical-scholarly circles was of a logical and syllogistic nature. It corresponded with the scholastic mode of thought that was also followed in other genres, such as the *questio disputata* or disputation, in which two or more university undergraduates conducted a debate, which was judged by a *magister* in a separate session, the *determinatio*.<sup>19</sup>

In a groundbreaking article in which she describes *spelen van sinne* as argumentations visualized through personifications, Marijke Spies points to the similarities in structure between scholastic disputations and *spelen van sinne*.<sup>20</sup> She regards the *disputatio*-character of the *spelen van sinne* as a sign of the didactic, homiletic, and basically medieval character of pre-1550 allegorical drama. These plays focus on offering solutions through deductive processes and reaffirming self-evident truths. This contrasts with drama of a more explorative and ‘probabilistic’ nature — that is, concentrating on possibility rather than certainty — which is essentially modern and humanistic.<sup>21</sup> In the latter, all possible solutions to particular problems are examined using inductive processes and taking account of the circumstances; it is not considered necessary to come to one ‘correct’ answer. Arguments on both sides are examined, *in utramque partem*. This ‘probabilistic’ line of argumentation was inspired by Ciceronian rhetoric, which

<sup>17</sup> Leeman and Braet, *Klassieke retorica*, p. 98.

<sup>18</sup> Helmich, *Die Allegorie*, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> B. C. Bazàn, ‘Les questions disputées, principalement dans les facultés des théologie’, in *Les questions disputées et les questions quodlibétiques dans les facultés de théologie, de droit et de médecine*, ed. by B. C. Bazàn and others (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 13–149 (pp. 40ff, particularly pp. 50–58).

<sup>20</sup> Spies, “Op de questye . . .”, p. 139.

<sup>21</sup> Spies derives this distinction from J. B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 13–30.

gained much influence during the sixteenth century, primarily through the education system.<sup>22</sup>

Spies's view is not without its critics. It is for example perfectly possible to consider the form and content of the pre-1550 competition plays and of the pre-1550 competition culture of the *rederijkers* in a modern or at least non-medieval context, and to see in them the expression of the humanistic predilection for rhetoric that became apparent amongst the broad middle classes of the urban population in the course of the sixteenth century.<sup>23</sup> That does not detract from the importance of the connection that she makes between allegorical drama and certain forms of argumentation (regardless of whether one classifies them as medieval or humanistic) and the relationship between drama and rhetoric in general, that is, including all of the *officia oratoris: inventio* (invention), *dispositio* (arrangement), *elocutio* (expression), *memoria* (memory), and finally *actio/pro-nunciatio* (delivery). Jody Enders explains in great detail the significance of rhetoric for medieval drama and the importance of drama for the practice of rhetoric (particularly in the legal profession).<sup>24</sup>

### *The Morality Play*

I now intend to examine the relationship between allegory and argumentation in the various categories of allegorical plays. An overview of the Dutch allegorical drama of the late Middle Ages cannot be limited to the *spel van sinne* (or for brevity's sake, the *zinnespel*) that constitutes only one part, however extensive and important it may be, of the body of plays in which the narrative is partly or wholly borne by personifications. The term 'morality play' can only be used in

<sup>22</sup> Altman, *Tudor Play of Mind*, pp. 31–65; J. R. Armstrong, 'The Dialectical Road to Truth: The Dialogue', in *French Renaissance Studies 1540–70: Humanism and the Encyclopedia*, ed. by P. Sharratt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1976), pp. 42–43. For education in the late Middle Ages and sixteenth century, see also R. R. Post, *Scholen en onderwijs in Nederland gedurende de middeleeuwen* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1954) and P. N. M. Bot, *Humanisme en onderwijs in Nederland* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1955).

<sup>23</sup> B. A. M. Ramakers, 'Tonen en betogen: De dramaturgie van de Rotterdamse spelen van 1561', in *De rhetorijcke in vele manieren: Lezingen bij het afscheid van Marijke Spies als Hoogleraar Oudere Nederlandse Letterkunde aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam*, ed. by H. Duits and T. Van Strien, special issue, *Spiegel der Letteren*, 42 (2001), 176–204.

<sup>24</sup> J. Enders, *Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

a narrow sense in the Netherlands. It is derived from French drama studies and is rarely used in Middle Dutch as a term for a dramatic genre. In the sense that it is used in both French and English dramatic studies, it is only applicable to some of the *zinnespelen*. Nevertheless, the term has become prevalent in writings on Dutch literary history because nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary history in the Netherlands was particularly influenced by that of the French. Moreover, we have a unique, fifteenth-century textbook example of such a morality play in *Elckerlijc*, which was edited, studied, and — most importantly — acclaimed at a very early stage. Every survey begins with *Elckerlijc*, and it is lauded as the oldest and best text of its genre.

What constitutes a morality play like *Elckerlijc*? Werner Helmich sums up the characteristics of allegorical theatre in his seminal study of the French *moralité*.<sup>25</sup> He regards this kind of morality play as the prototype of allegorical drama. His findings largely correspond with the findings of studies of English morality plays, including that by P. J. Houle, in which *Elckerlijc* comes up for discussion through its translation *Everyman*.<sup>26</sup> The central character in a morality play is a representative of the human race — hereinafter called Mankind — who frees himself from a state of sin or ignorance and enters a state of mercy or understanding. While he is helped in his efforts by personifications of good, personifications of evil attempt to thwart him. The process is often represented as a pilgrimage.<sup>27</sup> It is the best-known narrative motif encountered in moralities, and one which amply demonstrates the importance of images as a means to understanding and memorizing.<sup>28</sup> In the prototypical morality play, the pilgrimage takes up the entire life of Mankind, or in any case a long period, during which he originally lives in a state of innocence, succumbs to temptation, follows the broad path of evil, and finally either repents and dies in mercy or continues in his sinful ways and is taken to hell. Sometimes there are two characters representing Mankind, one of whom takes the path of good and the other the path of evil, to be vindicated and damned respectively. Due to the length of the life or the stage of life that is represented, and the doubling of the Mankind character, such morality plays can be very lengthy, like the French *Bien avisé, Mal avisé*.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Helmich, *Die Allegorie*, pp. 1–17.

<sup>26</sup> Houle, 'Comparative Study'.

<sup>27</sup> Helmich, *Die Allegorie*, pp. 164–81; E. Schell, *Strangers and Pilgrims: From 'The Castle of Perseverance' to 'King Lear'* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983), pp. 13–26.

<sup>28</sup> Hagen, *Allegorical Remembrance*, pp. 60–61, *passim*.

<sup>29</sup> In *Moralités Françaises*, ed. by W. Helmich (Geneva: Slatkine, 1980), pp. 1–110.



*Elckerlijc* is an example of this prototypical form, but with the following difference: it only dramatizes the final phase of the character's life journey, starting from the moment that God judges that Elckerlijc must die because of the sinful life that he has led — a life that is implied but not represented on stage. His death is explicitly referred to as a pilgrimage. The play is, however, rather short. In what Houle would call a 'full-scope morality play', the prior course of the character's life would also be shown, with all of its temptations, as well as the trial leading up to the moment that God passes judgement upon Elckerlijc.

The trial was, however, dramatized in *De Wellustige Mensch* by Jan van den Berghe from Antwerp,<sup>30</sup> which dates from around the middle of the sixteenth century. Despite its late date, it is more of a prototypical morality play than *Elckerlijc* is. In *De Wellustige Mensch*, the Mankind character is also led into temptation by personifications of evil, the *sinnekens* to be precise, the traditional duo of diabolical tempters.<sup>31</sup> They too belong to the standard elements of the *zinnespel*, together with the Mankind character and the 'innocence-fall-repentance-mercy' motif sequence. In *De Wellustige Mensch*, the *sinnekens* use an equally standard method of temptation: a visit to an inn or brothel, where Mankind often encounters a loose woman and where food, drink, and music combine to exert a treacherous attraction upon him. The vices of lust and gluttony rear their ugly heads, while pride and sloth play a background role. The *sinnekens* themselves and the characters and objects that Mankind encounters in the inn or brothel often have names connected with those vices and their consequences. In the prototypical morality play we thus find elements of the battle between vices and virtues which was described by Prudentius as early as the fourth century in his long allegorical poem, *Psychomachia*.<sup>32</sup> In early studies of morality plays, *Psychomachia* is identified as the origin of the morality play.<sup>33</sup>

The Trial in Heaven is also a standard narrative motif in morality plays. It has a long history, both on and off the stage. This debate between the four daughters of God — Justice and Truth, Mercy and Peace — takes place before God's

<sup>30</sup> *Dichten en spelen van Jan van den Berghe*, ed. by C. Kruyskamp (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1950).

<sup>31</sup> On the *sinnekens*, see Hummelen, *De sinnekens*.

<sup>32</sup> Helmich, *Die Allegorie*, pp. 12, 181–94.

<sup>33</sup> On this subject, see R. Potter, *The English Morality Play: Origins, History, and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1975), pp. 37–38.

throne and argues the chances of salvation for sinful Mankind.<sup>34</sup> The first two daughters argue against him; the other two argue in his defence. A variation on this is the 'satanic trial', in which Satan himself (or a lower-ranking demon) argues the case before God for the damnation of man, while the Virgin Mary argues for his justification. Such a trial is included in the *Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play*. We find the same motif dramatized independently in the pageant *Masscheroen* incorporated in the prose romance *Mariken van Nieumeghen*. Its argumentative character means that the trial in heaven can also be studied from a rhetorical perspective. The origin of the morality play has sometimes been sought in sermons, which use exempla in dialogue form, such as the Trial in Heaven.<sup>35</sup> Potter sees the morality play principally as 'repentance drama', drama about remorse, which can be linked, through the mendicant orders, with the content and function of medieval homiletics.<sup>36</sup>

A further narrative motif should also be mentioned: the linking — sometimes literally — to places and objects (e.g. chairs, beds) with allegorical names, and the liberation from them, as well as the changing of allegorical clothing and props. This is also incorporated in *zinnespelen*, from *Elckerlijc* through to *De Wellustige Mensch*. On the whole, these are strongly image-oriented plays. A strong tendency to rely upon images is, incidentally, a general characteristic of prototypical morality plays. Besides much iconicity, plays such as *De Wellustige Mensch* are also characterized by great musicality. The play is rich in melody and music, with complicated rhyme-schemes and stanza-forms, songs and instrumental compositions. Watching it must have been an extremely entertaining experience, which would explain why it was also popular outside Van den Berghe's birthplace Antwerp (in Brabant), and has survived in play collections from the village of 's-Gravenpolder (in Zeeland) and the town of Haarlem (in Holland).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> J. J. Mak, *Uyt ionsten versaemt: Retorische studiën 1946–1956* (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1957); Helmich, *Die Allegorie*, pp. 191–94; Spies, "Op de questye . . .", p. 142; H. Pleij, *Nederlandse literatuur van de late middeleeuwen* (Utrecht: HES, 1990), p. 197; Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren*, p. 356.

<sup>35</sup> G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 536–37; Schell, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>36</sup> Potter, *English Morality Play*, pp. 16–29, passim.

<sup>37</sup> The play has survived in collections in Haarlem and 's-Gravenpolder: see W. M. H. Hummelen, *Repertorium van het rederijkersdrama 1500–ca.1620* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968), 1 OA 6 and 1 U 16.

The dramaturgy of the *zinnespel* also includes (but is not limited to) the technique of moving perspective:<sup>38</sup> changing the point of view on the action or item that is being dramatized or debated, sometimes literally by moving it to a different part of the stage. That is mainly realized by the performance of the *sinnekens* in 'scenes apart' and the performance of tableaux vivants behind the opening at the rear of the stage. Generally speaking, when there are more than two characters, there is a greater chance that they will appear on stage in varying combinations and that the diversity of points of view and perspectives will increase. In combination with allegorical narrative motifs, this moving perspective technique provides more figurative variation, both in meaning and in images.

### *Historical and Explicative Plays*

In the collection '*Trou Moet Blijcken*', in which *De Wellustige Mensch* has survived, the play is referred to as a *spel van sinne*. The term was therefore used for prototypical morality plays, but it also applies to two other categories of allegorical plays.<sup>39</sup> The first of those categories consists of dramatizations of historical (mainly biblical) and mythological stories, in which characters from the original story appear alongside personifications (both *sinnekens* and allegorical characters) who perform a prologue to introduce the main action, and round it off with an epilogue in which they provide an explanation of it, in some cases allegorical. Examples of this are the play *Naaman*<sup>40</sup> and the two *Piramus en Thisbe* plays.<sup>41</sup> Because some prologues and epilogues are acted, they can take on the character of an 'outer' play, providing a framework to encompass the 'play-within-the-play', that is, the main dramatic action.

Hummelen describes plays such as *Naaman* as epic dramas or historical plays,<sup>42</sup> in order to distinguish them from 'explicative plays', that is, plays in

<sup>38</sup> Hummelen, 'Drama of the Dutch Rhetoricians', pp. 179, 188; and *Van moment tot moment* (Muiderberg: Coutinho, 1989), p. 146.

<sup>39</sup> See 'Lijst van technische termen voor de soortoanduiding', in Hummelen, *Repertorium*, pp. 339–40.

<sup>40</sup> *Naaman Prinche van Sijrien: Een rederijkersspel uit de zestiende eeuw*, ed. by W. M. H. Hummelen and C. Schmidt (Zutphen: Thieme, 1975).

<sup>41</sup> *Piramus en Thisbe: Twee rederijkersspelen uit de zestiende eeuw*, ed. by G. A. Van Es (Zwolle: Tjeenk-Willink, 1965). For allegorical elements, cf. Peter Happé, 'Pyramus and Thisbe: Rhetoricians and Shakespeare', in this volume.

<sup>42</sup> Hummelen, *De sinnekens*, pp. 28–29; Hummelen, *Repertorium*, pp. 12–13.

which all the characters are personifications and which aim at unfolding or explaining a certain central theme or concept. These explicative plays are the second category of allegorical plays that are also described as *spelen van sinne*. One group of plays were most explicitly designed for explication. Those are the plays that were written for drama competitions between towns, organized around a set theme, generally formulated as a question or *questie*. In such plays we almost exclusively encounter personifications. The only surviving competition plays date from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (although the fifteenth-century play *Elckerlijc* may also have been a competition play). They include the plays written for the Gent competition of 1539 and the famous Antwerp *Landjuweel* of 1561.<sup>43</sup> We do know that as early as the fifteenth century, drama competitions were held based around *questies* and in some cases we also know what their themes were.

The extensive body of work by Cornelis Everaert includes another group of explicative plays connected with competitions. They can be referred to with the contemporary term *comparaties* (comparisons), such as *Maria ghecompareirt by den scepe* (*Mary compared to a ship*).<sup>44</sup> In any case, they are not referred to as *spelen van sinne*. Everaert's dated work spans the period 1509–34. Although tempters with some characteristics of *sinnekens* sometimes appear in competition plays, their parts are not all that similar to those of the duo of tempters in *De Wellustige Mensch*. In Everaert's *comparaties*, such characters are entirely absent. In competition plays, we encounter fewer allegorical narrative motifs, and none at all in Everaert's *comparaties*. There is, however, generally a Mankind character who wrestles with the question that has been posed and goes in search of an answer. Plays with a Mankind character, prominent *sinnekens*, and allegorical

<sup>43</sup> Complete printed copies have survived of the plays of the Gent competition of 1539, the Antwerp and Rotterdam competitions of 1561, the Haarlem competition of 1606, and the Vlaardingen competition of 1616 (Hummelen, *Repertorium*, 3 B (Gent 1539), 3 C (Antwerp 1561), 3 D (Rotterdam 1561), 3 L (Haarlem 1606), 3 Q (Vlaardingen 1616)).

<sup>44</sup> J. W. Muller, and L. Scharpé, *Spelen van Cornelis Everaert* (Leiden: Brill, 1898–1920); D. Geeraerts, 'Dialogen uit de XVI<sup>e</sup> eeuw', in *Handelingen van het XXIV<sup>e</sup> Vlaams filologencongres* (Leuven: Peeters, 1961), pp. 248–62 (pp. 249–50). For an analysis of another *comparatie* by Everaert, see W. Hüskens, 'Cornelis Everaert en de Troon van Salomon', *Ons geestelijk erf*, 65 (1991), 244–64; and on Everaert's dramatic oeuvre his 'Cornelis Everaert and the Community of Late Medieval Bruges', in *Drama and Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe*, ed. by A. Hindley (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 110–25; and his 'Dead as a Doornail?: Allegory in the Plays of Cornelis Everaert', *European Medieval Drama*, 5 (2001), 165–74.

narrative motifs can be described as active, while those that lack any one of these characteristics would be better described as contemplative.

Spies's characterization of *zinnespelen* as dramatized argumentation is mainly based on competition plays. They are the most meaning-oriented of the allegorical plays. The dialogue, or rather the debate, is central and the audience is principally required to listen. However, at the same time the audience is drawn to watch, naturally by the personifications, but particularly by the performance of tableaux vivants. They were called *togen* (singular *toog*) and involved the showing of a living image meant to illustrate the argument. They are also encountered in prototypical morality plays, but usually limited to a few images. There are many more examples in the Gent plays of 1539 and in Everaert's *comparities*. Tableaux vivants were often performed during triumphal entries and processions.<sup>45</sup> At such events, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a category of allegorical plays was performed in which one or more tableaux vivants were explained or linked together by a dialogue between allegorical characters. *Menich Sympel ende Out Gedachte* (*Many Simple and Old Fashion*) by Colijn Caillieu, dating from 1466, is one such example.<sup>46</sup> Those plays could be described as *toogspelen* (tableaux plays). Everaert's *comparities* also belong to this category. The competitions during which they were performed were organized in the Bruges area during the early decades of the sixteenth century in connection with processions in honour of the Virgin Mary.<sup>47</sup>

For a proper understanding of these *toogspelen*, it is important not only to see the dialogue as a verbal explanation of the images, but also to interpret the images as visual illustrations of the dialogue, or rather — to formulate it in rhetorical terms — as visual arguments, exempla, or *loci communes* in the debate or conversation that the personifications have with each other. The performance of tableaux vivants during triumphal entries and processions generally had a didactic and, in the case of entries, sometimes even blatantly propagandistic aim.

<sup>45</sup> These concepts are derived from *De Gentse Spelen van 1539*, ed. by B. H. Ern  and L. M. van Dis, 2 vols ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1982), I, 15.

<sup>46</sup> R. Stein, 'Cultuur in context: Het spel van Menych Sympel (1466) als spiegel van de Brusselse politieke verhoudingen', *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 113 (1998), 289–321.

<sup>47</sup> B. A. M. Ramakers, 'Horen en zien, lezen en beleven: Over toogspelen in opvoering en druk', in *Spel in de verte: Tekst, structuur en opvoeringspraktijk van het rederijkerstoneel*, ed. by B. A. M. Ramakers (Gent, 1994) [= *Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Soevereine Hoofdkamer van Rhetorica 'De Fonteine' te Gent*, 41–42 (1991–92)], pp. 129–65. Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren*, p. 352, passim. See for the processions, Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren*, p. 387.

In and around the processions, education was conducted in as direct a fashion as possible. In as far as that was done through drama, it was a logical choice to employ allegory there as well. However, playwrights seldom opted for the structure of a prototypical morality play (i.e. the motif sequence ‘innocence-fall-repentance-mercy’ along with the other standard devices). Instead they used personifications who showed or illustrated their points by presenting tableaux vivants and put forward their arguments in a recitative style, either in monologues or dialogues. That was wholly in line with a non-dramatic genre that was widely practised on procession days: the homily. In fact, homiletics made a clear mark on the structure and the argumentative character of the *toogspelen*.

### *Dialogue and Disputation*

The earliest known allegorical play in the Dutch language, *Vanden Winter ende vanden Somer* (*Of the Winter and of the Summer*) in the *Van Hulthem-manuscript* (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 15.589–623), takes the form of a *questio disputata*.<sup>48</sup> Two allegorical characters, Winter and Summer, and their seconds, conduct a debate, which is eventually judged by a third character, Venus, in a *determinatio*. The elements of allegory and argumentation are clearly present. There is also plenty of erudition. The theme of the battle between Summer and Winter was already a long-standing intellectual (and therefore also mainly Latin) tradition in non-dramatic literature.<sup>49</sup> Aspects of that tradition can be found in this play.

With this play we undoubtedly find ourselves in the realm of vernacular drama, and in fact well into the period. This is evident from the parts of the comic characters *Loiaert* (Sluggard), *Moiaert* (Vanity), *Clappaert* (Gossip), and *Bollaert* (Windbag) — the four seconds — and *Die cockijn* (The vagrant). We know that the sort of plays to which the other *abele spelen* (*Esmoreit*, *Gloriant*, and *Lanseloet van Denemerken*) belong were very popular at the time of their conception — the second half of the fourteenth century. That is indicated not only by the fact that we find no less than three of those plays in one single

<sup>48</sup> Spies, “Op de questye . . .”, p. 144.

<sup>49</sup> H. Van Dijk, “Als ons die astrominen lesen”: Over het abel spel *Vanden Winter ende vanden Somer*, in *Tussentijds: Bundel studies aangeboden aan W. P. Gerritsen ter gelegenheid van zijn vijftigste verjaardag*, ed. by A. M. J. van Buuren (Utrecht: HES, 1985), pp. 56–70 (pp. 56–70).

manuscript but also by the fairly large number of references to romance plays in the archives. There were other dramatizations of the battle between Summer and Winter as well. There is, however, scant evidence of other allegorical plays before the second half of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century. We have to wait for *Elckerlijc*, which is however much less argumentative and furthermore an unquestionable product of the *rederijkers*.

Nevertheless, even in this early period, a distinct, individual category of plays must have been recognized and performed in which two characters or parties, whether or not in the form of personifications, conducted a verbal dispute about an abstract or at least intellectual issue. Looking at plays which share the same characteristics rather than limiting ourselves to those which are contemporaneous, it would seem that some *tafelspelen* provide better examples of this category of play than *Vanden Winter ende vanden Somer*.<sup>50</sup> A large number of these *tafelspelen* have survived.<sup>51</sup> Characteristic of most of them is that they generally involve two or three allegorical characters conducting a debate.<sup>52</sup> That is often a 'battle for precedence' between the concepts represented by the personifications.<sup>53</sup> It is clear from what the characters say that such *tafelspelen* were regarded as dramatized debates. There are also clear similarities with early rhetorical genres such as the *spotsermoen* (known in French as *sermon joyeux*) and written dialogues.<sup>54</sup> Although the surviving *tafelspelen* — with the exception of another play by Colijn Caillieu — date from the period after 1500,<sup>55</sup> the genre must have been long practised before this time. As *tafelspelen* were performed in the home and only a few players were required, they may well have been part of the repertoire of travelling entertainers, such as storytellers. Furthermore, in those circles, people were also familiar with dialogical text genres such as *dialoghen* (dialogues), *disputacies* (disputations), and *twispraken* (debates).

The influence of non-dramatic texts of an argumentative or dialogical character was strong enough to stimulate the emergence of argumentative drama.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Geeraerts, 'Dialogen uit de XVI<sup>e</sup> eeuw', p. 249.

<sup>51</sup> P. Pikhaus, *Het tafelspel bij de rederijkers*, 2 vols (Gent: KANTL, 1988), I, 35–85.

<sup>52</sup> See the table in Pikhaus, *Het tafelspel*, I, 78–85.

<sup>53</sup> Pikhaus, *Het tafelspel*, I, 160–61, 172–73.

<sup>54</sup> Pikhaus, *Het tafelspel*, I, 9–34; Spies, "'Op de questye . . .'", p. 139, n. 3.

<sup>55</sup> Pikhaus, *Het tafelspel*, I, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Hans Walther, *Das Streitgedicht in der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, Quellen und untersuchungen zur Lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters, 5 (Hildesheim: Olms, 1920), pp. 1–254.

These texts were after all similar to drama. That is made clear by the *mise-en-page* of the written text, where the debate wholly or almost wholly consists of passages of direct speech separated by headings indicating the names of the speakers or debaters, as if they were passages in a play-script. In a reception situation in which such texts were not merely read individually (silently or out loud) but recited by one, two, or more performers (in the latter case, the similarities with theatre would be even greater), it would be virtually impossible to distinguish them from drama. In the latter case, whether this could be described as drama depends on the extent to which the performers used voice, expression, gesture, and costume, and possibly masks, in other words upon the extent to which they impersonated the speakers.

*Vanden Winter ende vanden Somer*, along with the three other *abele spelen*, probably belonged to the repertoire of a professional theatre group that performed indoors. They may well have had texts for recital in their repertoire as well. Either such *camerspelers* (chamber players) traditionally performed various arts or they associated with practitioners of other arts, because in the archives and in other documents, as well as in pictorial material, they are to be found alongside magicians, acrobats, and puppeteers.<sup>57</sup> The association with performance and puppetry is significant. To begin with the latter: puppetry formed part of the professional entertainment that was performed in medieval courts, and it often focussed on chivalry.<sup>58</sup> The Oxford manuscript of the Alexander romance contains a marginal illustration of a puppet show, with puppets in courtly dress.<sup>59</sup> Frits van Oostrom has drawn attention to a similar illustration in a copy of the *Speculum doctrinale* by Vincent of Beauvais.<sup>60</sup> It depicts a group of young clerics seated at the feet of their master, watching a puppet show. It would therefore seem that puppetry was also popular in ecclesiastical circles, but in that case as a tool for instruction. Van Oostrom even suggests that the four dialogues between Jacob and Martijn, which are part of the *Strofische gedichten* (*Stanzaic poems*, hereinafter to be referred to as the *Martijns*), written by Jacob van Maerlant, served as a score for such didactic puppet shows.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren*; D. Hogenelst, *Sproken en sprekers: Inleiding op een repertorium van de Middelnederlandse sproke* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1997), p. 145.

<sup>58</sup> A. Nicoll, *Masks, Mimes and Miracles: Studies in the Popular Theatre* (London: Harrap, 1931), pp. 166–69.

<sup>59</sup> Nicoll, *Masks, Mimes and Miracles*, p. 168.

<sup>60</sup> F. van Oostrom, *Maerlants wereld* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1996), p. 74.

<sup>61</sup> Van Oostrom, *Maerlants wereld*, pp. 74–75.



Stephanus Axters has linked the argumentative character of the *Martijns* to scholastic argumentative genres.<sup>62</sup> Jacob van Maerlant was the most important and prolific didactic writer of the medieval Low Countries. He must have become familiar with these argumentative genres during his time as a pupil at the monastic school of St Donaas (Donatus) in Bruges. Particularly during the thirteenth century, the century in which he lived and worked, scholastic methods of thought and teaching were becoming popular at all levels of ecclesiastical education.<sup>63</sup> Maerlant's work *Maskeroen*, part of the *Historie van den Grale*, which he wrote around 1261, also has the character of a disputation. It relates a satanic trial involving God, the devil Maskeroen, and the Virgin Mary. It is a theological disputation in legal form, namely that of a *Litigacio* or trial.<sup>64</sup> Again, Maerlant must have learned the finer points of this form during his schooling.

Within Maerlant's body of work and didactic literature in general, the *Martijns* are not alone. Other *Strofische gedichten* were also written in the form of dialogues, even 'dramatizing' personified concepts such as Reason and Religion.<sup>65</sup> Axters drew up a list of forty-five disputations on a wide variety of themes.<sup>66</sup> Maerlant is not the only author we know by name who wrote such works; Jan van Boendale (c. 1280–c. 1352) from Antwerp, Dirc van Delft (fl. 1404), and Willem van Hildegarsberch (fl. 1375–1408) did the same. Some were copied in dialogue form as dramatic texts and provided with speakers' headings in the manner described above. The fact that they formed part of the repertoire of storytellers such as Hildegarsberch suggests a link between allegorical theatre and recital. Hildegarsberch's story *Dat ewangelium van Paeschen* (*The gospel of*

<sup>62</sup> S. Axters, 'Over "Quaestio disputata" en "questio de quodlibet" in de Middelnederlandse literatuur', *Ons geestelijk erf*, 1 (1943), 31–70 (pp. 45–49); Geeraerts, 'Dialogen uit de XVI<sup>e</sup> eeuw', pp. 248–49; see also Spies, "'Op de questye . . .'", p. 143, and Van Oostrom, *Maerlants wereld*, p. 73.

<sup>63</sup> Walther, *Das Streitgedicht*, v, 1–254; Axters, 'Over "Quaestio disputata"', pp. 37–39; Bazàn, 'Les questions disputées', pp. 13–149.

<sup>64</sup> Helmich, *Die Allegorie*, p. 193; Van Oostrom, *Maerlants wereld*, pp. 41–46; see also F. van Oostrom, '1261: Jacob van Maerlant bewerkt de *Maskeroen*. Het recht als voedingsbodem voor episch drama', in *Een theatergeschiedenis der Nederlanden: Tien eeuwen drama en theater in Nederland en Vlaanderen*, ed. by R. L. Erenstein and others (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), pp. 10–15. For the relation between medieval drama and judicial rhetoric, see Enders, *Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama*.

<sup>65</sup> Van Oostrom, *Maerlants wereld*, p. 72.

<sup>66</sup> Axters, 'Over "Quaestio disputata"', pp. 63–70; see also the corrections and supplements to this by Spies, "'Op de questye . . .'", pp. 143–44.

*Easter*) seems indisputably to fit into the same tradition as the Latin Easter plays.<sup>67</sup> Thorough analysis of the dramatic merits of this tale and others could provide interesting insights into the relationship between recital and drama.<sup>68</sup>

Two disputations referred to by Axters appear in the *Van Hulthem-manuscript*: *Ene disputacie tusschen enen clerc ende sinen meester* (*A disputation between a cleric and his master*) and *Deen gheselle calengiert den anderen die wandelinghe* (*One companion reprimands another for his living*).<sup>69</sup> The former takes the form of a master-student debate and centres on whether money or happiness is more important; the latter, a disputation between two storytellers, discusses the question how the profession of orator can best be practised. The second disputation prompts the interesting suggestion that the ‘roles’ in dialogues were recited in turn by two storytellers. In the *Van Hulthem-manuscript*, the names of the ‘roles’ in the first dialogue, those of *Meester* and *Clerc*, are repeated at the beginning of each ‘speech’ and marked with a rubricated majuscule.<sup>70</sup> Whereas in that manuscript the names of the speakers are still written on the same line as the ‘speeches’, in the dialogue of *De mensche* (Mankind) and *Redene* (Reason) in the *Geraardsbergen-manuscript* (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 837–45) they are inserted between them like passage headings in a play-script.<sup>71</sup> In that case, the *mise-en-page* can no longer be clearly distinguished from that of the *abele spelen* in the *Van Hulthem-manuscript*. The personifications which appear there can also be found in allegorical plays.

### *Conceptual Approach*

Personifications appear in many plays — the competition plays, Everaert’s *comparities*, and the *toogspelen* — but just like the plot, they cannot be understood

<sup>67</sup> T. Meder, ‘Omstreeks 1266: In *Der naturen bloeme* worden sprooksprekers en acteurs vergeleken met een Vlaamse gaai. De vroegste bronnen van het wereldlijk theater’, in *Een theatergeschiedenis der Nederlanden*, ed. by Erenstein and others, pp. 16–23 (p. 21).

<sup>68</sup> Hogenelst, *Sproken en sprekers*, p. 195.

<sup>69</sup> Axters, ‘Over “Quaestio disputata”’, p. 65, no. 9; p. 70, no. 39; *Het handschrift-Van Hulthem: Hs. Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, 15.589–623*, ed. by H. Brinkman and J. Schenkel, 2 vols, *Middeleeuwse Verzamelhandschriften uit de Nederlanden*, 7 (Hilversum: Verloren, 1999), I, 550–55, no. 113; II, 778–83, no. 149.

<sup>70</sup> *Het handschrift-Van Hulthem*, ed. by Brinkman and Schenkel, fols 98<sup>rb</sup>–99<sup>rb</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> Axters, ‘Over “Quaestio disputata”’, p. 66, no. 14; *Het Geraardsbergse handschrift: Hs. Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, 837–845*, ed. by M.-J. Govers and others, *Middeleeuwse Verzamelhandschriften uit de Nederlanden*, 1 (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994), pp. 72–77, no. 57.

in terms of the same categories as those developed for morality plays. The argumentative competition plays do not compare favourably with prototypical morality plays. The central motif of Mankind lapsing into sin and being consequently saved is either wholly lacking or present only in a diluted form. The allegorical characters mainly engage in speech. Thus the *rederijkers* seem to have lost themselves increasingly in lifeless dramatic debates, a frequently heard criticism by literary historians.

This highlights one disadvantage of a generic approach to allegorical drama. Plays that deviate from the prototype are seen as later derivatives, which can easily lead to depreciation.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, most competition plays do not conform to modern concepts of drama. It has already been mentioned that very little seems to happen in a dramatic sense. Nowadays we cannot imagine that people enjoyed watching and listening to dramatized debates. Neither do we really understand the predilection for tableaux vivants that is evident in some plays. People living in the late Middle Ages were, however, very familiar with the recital of argumentative rhetorical texts and with watching (or contemplating) still images.<sup>73</sup> The same applies to presenting abstractions or realities as personifications. As far as the chronology is concerned, allegorical drama of an argumentative nature goes back much further than the sixteenth century and was clearly already being performed during the fifteenth century on occasions such as competitions, triumphal entries, and processions.

Another disadvantage of a generic approach to allegorical drama is that it obscures similarities in form, content, and context with other (dramatic) genres, because it takes the researcher to the periphery of the genre. If one must make a distinction between the centre and the periphery, it would seem more appropriate to place the more argumentative plays in the centre, given the predominance of argumentative rhetorical genres in late medieval literature. In addition to their educational, didactic design, those genres also have in common with allegorical drama that they functioned within the more or less public oratory of the town. Public oratory was at its most prominent on the streets, during processions, triumphal entries, markets, and fairs, when plays and tableaux vivants were presented, prayers were said and sermons were delivered, stories were told, songs were sung, and refrains and ballads were recited. In the public arena of the market square and the streets, proclamations and decrees were read aloud. Public

<sup>72</sup> Hummelen, 'Drama of the Dutch Rhetoricians', pp. 177–78.

<sup>73</sup> Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren*, pp. 27–34.

oratory in the form of prayers and sermons took place on a more limited but still considerable scale in churches too. There was also a certain amount of public oratory in schools and universities, where oral dialogues and disputations formed part of the curriculum. What many argumentative plays have in common with those genres is that they were also distributed as didactic study texts, whether in manuscript or in printed form.

Little research has been done on the influence of those argumentative text genres on Dutch allegorical drama. It would be worthwhile to examine from the viewpoint of argumentation plays which until now have principally been examined from an allegorical viewpoint, and vice versa. In many *zinnespelen* with the character of morality plays, the conversion of Mankind is accompanied by prayers and hymns in ballad form. *De Wellustige Mensch* even incorporates an entire sermon. Long monologues directed by the educational authorities to Mankind often have a declamatory character and are peppered with biblical *loci* and *auctoritates*. Their conversation often takes the form of a didactic dialogue in the medieval sense, with a question-and-answer structure. The advisers and tempters of Mankind sometimes attack each other verbally as generally happened in a disputation; the same applies to the *sinnekens*.

Plays with a strongly argumentative character could also be examined on their visual and theatrical elements. As I mentioned above, well-considered and meticulous use was made of the playing area and the expressions, gestures, and costumes of the characters, particularly in plays with much speech and little action. It is, after all, characteristic of dramatic allegory that such non-verbal elements have meaning and reinforce the effect of the spoken word. In that sense, allegory belongs to what could be described as visual rhetoric. The nature and effect of tableaux vivants in the argumentative *zinnespelen* would merit close examination in this context. It would be necessary to catalogue and study their rhetorical effect, taking into account the representation of the same subjects in the visual arts.

### *Conclusion*

Ultimately, the following quotation from Robert Potter is true both of the more allegorical, image-oriented plays and those of a more argumentative, meaning-oriented nature:

The theatricality of the morality play proves to be its saving grace, given the necessity of holding and entertaining and significantly moving its audience. At their best the morality playwrights work with the eye of a skilled preacher or public speaker —

balancing rhetoric and earnestness against an awareness that the audience must be surprised and delighted and mousetrapped into understanding.<sup>74</sup>

What the authors of allegorical plays (as well as their directors and actors) must certainly have understood was that speech and argumentation on their own did not make for good drama, in any case not drama worth seeing. Besides the general tools of voice, expression, gesture, and costume, the special device of allegory was needed to turn monologues and dialogues into true drama which, because of the meaning and images provided, was made even more educational.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Potter, *English Morality Play*, p. 33.

<sup>75</sup> On the importance of education in the English interludes, see David Mills, "Education, Education, Education!" *Nice Wanton* and the Allegorical Tradition', *European Medieval Drama*, 5 (2001), 191–203.

## PYRAMUS AND THISBE: RHETORICIANS AND SHAKESPEARE

Peter Happé

THE chief intention of this essay is to compare the dramatic techniques used by three sixteenth-century dramatists in adapting Ovid's tale of Pyramus and Thisbe in his *Metamorphoses* (4. 51–166).<sup>1</sup> The purpose of such a comparison is to reflect upon differing aspects of the nature of drama itself, and also to consider the ways in which these adaptations illuminate and modify the narrative. In order to do these things we shall have to look at some aspects of the narrative tradition which developed around Ovid's poem, and also at two very different dramatic cultures. The dramatic versions in focus are the anonymous *Spel van sinnen van de Historie van Piramus en Thisbe* found in the manuscript collection of the Haarlem Rhetoricians, *Trou Moet Blijcken* (henceforward 'Haarlem'); the text of *Pyramus ende Thisbe*, attributed to Matthijs de Castelein printed first at Antwerp (henceforward 'Antwerp'); and Shakespeare's 'The most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe' prepared in I. 2, rehearsed in III. 1, and performed in V. 1 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ovid: Metamorphoses*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). All quotations and translations are from this volume.

<sup>2</sup> The texts used here are in *Piramus en Thisbe: Twee rederijkersspelen uit de zestiende eeuw*, ed. by G. A. van Es (Zwolle: Willink, 1965), and William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Harold F. Brooks (London: Methuen, 1979). There is a print facsimile of the Haarlem play in *Trou Moet Blijcken: Bronnenuitgave van de Boeken der Haarlemse Rederijkerskamer 'de Pellicanisten'*, ed. by W. N. M. Hüskens, B. A. M. Ramakers, and F. A. M. Schaars (Assen: Uitgeverij Quarto, 1992), II: *Boek B*, fols 141<sup>v</sup>–149.

Before coming to the narrative traditions and the dramatizations it is desirable to clarify the status of the three texts upon which this study is based. The Haarlem text, which G. A. van Es, its principal editor, dates as *c.* 1518, contains 565 lines in his edition, and it is in the hand of the scribe Goossen ten Berch, from the archive of the Chamber *De Pellicanisten*. It is probably close to an actual performance. The Antwerp text, of 1531 lines, was printed *c.* 1520.<sup>3</sup> It contains twenty-three woodcuts (some of them used more than once) which are spread throughout the text. Subsequently the play was reprinted at Gent (1573) and Rotterdam (1612, 1616). In these later editions short narrative summaries have been inserted before the dramatized events, and together with a further collection of woodcuts they suggest that the play became, and perhaps began, as a text for reading rather than for acting. But if this is so, the dramatic techniques are nevertheless manifest and formidable, and they are also distinct from those of the Haarlem play. The reprinting suggests that the Antwerp play commanded a potential readership for a considerable time.

Shakespeare's text has come down to us in the First Quarto (1600) which Harold F. Brooks describes as being of the highest textual authority, printed from a Shakespeare autograph.<sup>4</sup> The Second Quarto (1619) was printed after Shakespeare's death and, deriving from the First, has little independent authority. However, for the First Folio (1623) the copy-text was a copy of this Second Quarto annotated from a prompt book. Thus the First Quarto is likely to be very close to performance, and it can be supplemented by further details directly related to playhouse practice embodied in the Folio.

The starting point for a consideration of the narrative must be Ovid's original version in which we may perceive some aspects deriving from the context of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Metamorphoses*. We find that the changes brought about during the unfolding of the individual stories in Ovid's collection, often as a result of love, determine many of their structures. In this case it is the changing of the colour of the fruit of the mulberry tree by the spurting blood of Pyramus as he kills himself for love. Though for Ovid the classical gods were often remote from human affairs, Thisbe's request to the tree that its fruit should always bear the dark colour as a memorial of the double death touched them, and the fruit remained as she had asked (lines 158–61, 164–66). Much of the tone of this narrative is serious and foreboding, as for example Thisbe's emerging

<sup>3</sup> *Piramus en Thisbe*, ed. by Van Es, p. III.

<sup>4</sup> Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Brooks, p. xxii.

from her hiding place trembling and fearful that her lover will miss her (lines 128–29) and her equating her own love and readiness to die with the emotions of Pyramus (line 150).

But against this we must put Ovid's reputation as a witty and paradoxical poet and the sense that sometimes his dazzling language undermines the seriousness, or at least invites us to refocus it. Thus the very idea of whispering through a hole in a wall, and of the lovers kissing each side of the wall and not one another as the kisses could not go through, has in it the ridiculousness of love, to say the least. Sometimes Ovid's expression seems more occupied with wit than feeling:

quique a me morte revelli  
heu solas poteris, poteris nec morte revelli.

[Whom death alone had power to part from me, not even death shall have power to part from me.] (lines 152–53)

And the spurting blood from the recumbent Pyramus seems a detail which is not entirely serious: 'atque ictibus aera rumpit' ([like water] cleaving the air with its jets'; line 124). It is perhaps this double effect in the tone of his expression as well as in the invention of incidents in the narrative which have made Ovid such a fruitful object of interrogation for many generations of readers and writers. His sense that it is the tragic error of Pyramus in mistaking the bloodied cloak is unmistakable, but the emotional impact is somewhat distanced by the author's observing eye and probing tongue.

At the end of the classical period there began a Christianization of Ovid's work, perhaps stimulated by a need to counter his emphasis upon sexuality. This involved moralization of the stories, including Venantius Fortunatus, who, in the sixth century, presented some amorous aspects of the poetry as a nun's love for Christ.<sup>5</sup> This process continued through the medieval period, but in the fourteenth century it was formalized in France in the *Ovide Moralisé*. In this work the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is recounted in detail, but it is concluded by a deliberate allegorical application. Essentially this interpreted Pyramus as a figure for Christ who came to earth for the love of mankind and suffered upon the cross, exciting compassion. The blood of Pyramus suggests the blood of Christ upon the cross, and the poet urges this as a prompt to penitence.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> *Ovide Moralisé*, ed. by C. de Boer, 2 vols (Wiesbaden: Sändig, 1920; repr., 1966), 4. 1176–96.



Later, in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, the allegory was further elaborated by Pierre Berçuire (Petrus Berchorius) in his *Reductorium Morale*.<sup>7</sup> He allegorizes the story so as to include the Incarnation and the Passion. Pyramus is the Son of God, and Thisbe the human soul who loved Him and was close to Him. But they were separated by the sin of Adam (the wall) and this led to the Incarnation, foretold by the prophets. However the Devil, here the lioness, prevented the soul from approaching the fountain of grace and baptism (the fountain by the tomb of Ninus). The delay in Pyramus's arrival echoes the long wait for Christ. The mulberry tree is the cross, stained black with the blood of Christ, and likewise Thisbe is transfixed by the sword in compassion for His death. To this is added yet another figure, showing Thisbe as the Virgin Mary at the foot of the cross who wished to die for pity, pierced by the sword of the Passion. This version of the story was substantially repeated in French by Thomas Valois in the *Bible des Poètes*.<sup>8</sup>

Its dissemination was no doubt facilitated by its printing by Antoine Vérard in 1493. The structure of the allegory is very similar, even in the use of scriptural references from Habakkuk and St Luke. It is remarkable, though, that the illustrations to the *Bible des Poètes* have no reference to the allegorical interpretation which they share. This is the more surprising because the woodcut in Vérard's 1493 edition and that in the edition printed by Colard Mansion at Bruges in 1494 are substantially the same in outline and design, even though one is clearly a recreation of the other.<sup>9</sup>

The two Rhetoricians plays we are considering were conceived within this allegorical inheritance, though the manipulation of interpretation does actually differ between them. This in itself is an indication of one of the chief properties of allegory: its capacity to proliferate meanings. Shakespeare's inheritance of Pyramus and Thisbe, however, comes from a different tradition, embodied in the work of a series of English poets. There is no mistaking the importance of Ovid in the Renaissance educational system to which Shakespeare was submitted, and it too had been influenced by medieval precedents. His work was indeed the concern of every schoolboy who learned Latin, and even though such

<sup>7</sup> There is a Latin extract in *Piramus en Thisbe*, ed. by Van Es, pp. 293–95.

<sup>8</sup> Printed by Van Es, *Piramus en Thisbe*, pp. 295–302.

<sup>9</sup> See T. Waleys, *Ovide de Salmonen son livre intitulé le Metamorphoses* (Bruges, 1494), sig. ai, and *La Bible des Poètes* (Paris: A. Verard, 1507), No. 10. For further discussion of illustrations, see M. D. Henkel, *De houtsneden van Mansion's Ovide Moralisé* (Bruges 1494/84) (Amsterdam: Van Kampen, 1922).

learning might be painfully acquired, it was not easily forgotten. However, the English tradition as manifested by Chaucer in *The Legend of Good Women*, John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, John Lydgate's *Reson and Sensuallyte*, and Arthur Golding's translation in his *The XV Bookes of P. Ovidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis* (1567) does not follow the continental allegory.<sup>10</sup> It is however marked by its medieval context as well as by the impact of Renaissance humanism. The medieval didactic impulse shows itself in the climax of Gower's narrative:

and sodeinly  
His swerd al nakid out he breide [took  
In his folhaste. (lines 1429–31)

After the episode Genius, Gower's dominant narrator, underlines this message about foolhardiness. It is emphasized by the topos of the power of Cupid which entraps lovers into 'wofull peine' (line 1361). Lydgate's treatment comes within the context of his allegory of the Garden of Deduit (Pleasure), or of Cupid. Lydgate's work is directed partly towards that kind of encyclopedic medieval learning which imparts information as well as moral instruction. He describes how the garden has many strange fruits which are corrupt and which change colour, but there is also an underlying threat potent in the transition from moral discourse into the narrative of Pyramus and Thisbe:

Swich ys the custom in that place:  
Soote alwey at prime face [sweet  
But bitternesse ay concludeth. (lines 3949–51)

The introduction to the episode also refers to fraud and deception in the Garden, 'Folke to deceyven and begile' (lines 3909–11). Lydgate's treatment of the narrative itself is much shorter than that of Gower, and in proportion he spends much longer in his grim account of the dangers posed by the Garden itself. Indeed his tone is threatening throughout, and he ends by referring to trees to be found there which can kill by their shadow (lines 4011–12).

The differences in dramatic culture which back up these dramatizations may be briefly summarized here. On the one hand, by the sixteenth century the Rhetoricians were well-established creators and performers of plays. Some of the poets

<sup>10</sup> These texts are in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), lines 706–923; John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by R. A. Peck (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 3. 1331–1494; *Lydgate's Reson and Sensuallyte*, ed. by E. Sieper, EETS e.s. 84 (London: Kegan Paul, 1901), lines 3897–4012; for Golding, see Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Brooks, Appendix I, pp. 149–53.

were regularly paid for their contribution, but the performers were essentially amateurs. The frequency of competition encouraged a deliberate demonstration of both poetic skills and competence in performance. The custom of developing the plays around an interpretative theme, even when deliberate use was made of an established narrative such as *Pyramus and Thisbe*, encouraged an ingenuity about its application and also brought out many devices of expression and performance which could be linked to it. These were enhanced by the widespread use of *sinnekens*, who embodied negative abstract concepts relevant to the theme and whose presence on the stage could be exploited in a variety of ways. Chiefly they were used to comment on the application of their own abstractions, and upon the development of the action, to make the lives of the chief characters more and more uncomfortable, either as tempters or as simply the embodiment of conflicting or destructive forces. Their purposes were evil, though they were stage characterizations rather than devils, the effects of their direct intervention were always disastrous for the participants, and they provided both serious moral instruction and diversionary comedy.<sup>11</sup>

By contrast, in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the theatres of Shakespeare's London had become professional before his first plays had appeared, employing actors and writers and being managed as a business with the sharing of profits. The entry of the audience was subject to a charging system which provided the financial basis for theatrical competence. Though there was a strong inheritance from the medieval stage in both the practices of staging and the moral and religious concepts embodied in the plays, the intensity of commercial competition and the necessity of providing frequently changing entertainment encouraged an increasingly wide repertoire. This was fuelled by religious and political changes and by the increasingly broad cultural basis resulting from the impact of Reformation and Renaissance. The playhouses played to both elite and popular tastes simultaneously: indeed it is difficult to separate these effectively. The structure of plays responded to a variety of acting skills including doubling, the performance of specialist roles like Fools, and the impact of popular and successful individual actors, something approximating to modern star performers.

But in spite of these differences, we can still address the ways in which the three dramatists under consideration set about bringing the story of *Pyramus and Thisbe* to their respective stages. The two Rhetoricians work on the topic in

<sup>11</sup> See W. M. H. Hummelen, *De sinnekens in het rederijersdrama* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1958) and Peter Happé and Wim Hüskens, "Sinnekens" and The Vice: Prolegomena', *Comparative Drama*, 29 (1995), 248–69.

distinct ways. For the Haarlem author the main development of the plot is characterized by the names of the *sinneken*. *Sinnelijcke Genegenheijt* (Sensual Appetite) and *Hertelijcke Lust* (Passionate Lust) both suggest that the story be seen in terms of its erotic aspects and the dangers of love. Initially they describe how they affect lovers, making them ridiculous. Their demonstration of the folly of their victims is enhanced by two further allegorical personifications. *Damoreuse* (Amorousness) embodies the force of love and, in his address to Venus, is deeply stirred by the two aspects of passion represented by the *sinneken*. The latter speak to him and he replies, so that the dramatization actually turns upon the interrelationship in dialogue. More mysterious is *Poetelijck Geest, een docktoor* (Poetic Spirit), who has access to the learning of Ovid and severely advises *Damoreuse* against lechery and in favour of honour and wisdom (lines 89–104). It is he who introduces the story of Pyramus and Thisbe: he does not disapprove of them, however, calling them ‘beautiful souls’ (line 118).

Their story is then enacted, though the only characters to appear are the lovers themselves, the lioness, and the *sinneken*, who interact with the lovers and make comments. They encourage Pyramus, endorsing his praise of Thisbe, and urging him to seek her through the hole in the wall, but perhaps with an eye to destroying him: as he departs, an unhappy ending is envisaged (line 190). When Thisbe appears, the *sinneken* again encourage passion, and she herself admits to their power over her, referring to them by their names (lines 213–15). The ensuing dialogue between the lovers presumably takes place through the wall. It is undoubtedly a portrayal of strongly passionate love, yet because the wall is referred to, ‘speaking through the hole just like a thief’ (line 242), the potential for the ridiculous may well be present. After the lovers have agreed their tryst at the tomb of Ninus, the *sinneken* indulge in a farcical impersonation of them which juxtaposes lechery and honour (lines 321–23). The *sinneken* welcome Thisbe to the fountain, albeit there is ‘grief and sorrow’ (line 344). As the Lioness frightens Thisbe away, they too are frightened (lines 348–49), and they provide some detail about the bloodied mantle. When Pyramus appears the climax of his death is quickly presented, without further intervention of the *sinneken*. He repeats the idea from Ovid that he is responsible for the death of Thisbe. When he dies the *sinneken* blame one another for his death: this mutual recrimination in itself is a conventional device for their role,<sup>12</sup> but it must serve here to detract

<sup>12</sup> For an extended passage in which two *sinneken* blame one another in a set-piece of such rivalry, see *Die becooringe des duvels hoe hij cristus becoorden: Zestiende-eeuws rederijkersstuk van Jan Tömsiz*, ed. by Herman van Iperen and others (Amsterdam: Stichting Neerlandistiek VU, 1998), lines 13–179.

from the tragic impact of the death of Pyramus, and in this way it may be a recall of Ovidian cynicism. The death of Thisbe, also enacted without intervention, is presented as an example to lovers of faithfulness. The *sinnekens* again blame one another, but they also refer to misfortune and draw attention to the change in the mulberry tree. Their main theme however is that there is 'More gall than honey' and:

Minne is een soedt quaet  
daer mede onder voet gaet // verstant en reden. (lines 427–28)

[Love is a sweet evil  
By which sense and reason are trampled under foot.]<sup>13</sup>

The *sinnekens* then disappear from the play with the conventional expectation that they will appear elsewhere, bringing, as they say, the same soup to other lovers (line 435).

The rest of the Haarlem play (lines 436–565) consists of *Poetelijck Geest's* exposition to *Damoreuse* of the nature and danger of 'improper love'. Those who pursue it kill their own souls; but there is another, higher love 'which has power over all other virtues' (line 453). In general the allegory follows what we have noted in relation to the *Ovid Moralisé*, but there are variations. Thisbe is seen as the bride of the Canticles (lines 481, 553) rather than the soul which seeks Christ. The interpretation is pointed by a visual show noted in a stage direction: *Now [Poetic Spirit] shows him Christ on the Cross, Mary, John standing under it* (line 461sd). This may have been a tableau vivant, or perhaps even a pictorial representation. Interestingly it can be revealed a second time, for Amorousness asks to see it again because his eyes cannot get enough of it (line 475 and sd). The cloak, here a headcloth, is seen as the immaculate soul which the lioness (devil) sought to have killed. The chief theme, however, is to replace the corrupt worldly sexual love with one which expresses spirituality, and it is clear that the stage techniques we have been noticing are directed towards sharpening this contrast. The spiritual interpretation of these two kinds of love is in a preparation for the allegory.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Translations are from *For Pleasure and Profit: Six Dutch Rhetoricians Plays*, ed. and trans. by Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé (forthcoming).

<sup>14</sup> Gary K. Waite notes that the interpretation of events by Poetic Spirit carries a Catholic bias, and that the play is thus part of the sectarian confrontations deeply embedded in Rhetoricians drama; see his *Reformers on Stage: Popular Drama and Religious Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515–1556* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 95–96.

The Antwerp play is more than twice as long as the one from Haarlem, allowing the author scope for presenting more complex dramatic material. He does, however, rely upon the *sinnekens* to carry out a function which is both moral and theatrical. The Prologue emphasizes the pure love between Pyramus and Thisbe, but in a brief anticipation of the story he makes it clear that they were also oppressed by love and that they were overtaken by a great misfortune (line 49). As soon as the action begins the *sinnekens* reveal their names: *Fraudelic Schijn* (Fraudulent Appearance) and *Bedrieghelic Waen* (Deceptive Interpretation). They give a summary of the intense affection between Pyramus and Thisbe starting when they were children, but as they begin to unfold the action they reveal the trickery which underlines their apparent support:

Wi moeten tvier in deen hant draghen  
 En twater in dander: dats ons natuere.  
 Wi sullense dienen en stellen ter luere  
 Van tsoete in tsuere / van tclare in trubbelen. (lines 179–82)

[We have to carry fire in one hand  
 And water in the other — that's how we work.  
 And we shall serve them and leave them to ruin  
 From sweetness to gall, from lightness to dark.]

The description of the early happiness of the lovers as children is connected by them to the *Metamorphoses*, but there is a hint that the lovers were already at risk because they concealed their love and proceeded in part by deception:

Subtijnl van rade  
 Moesten si huer liefden secretelic passen. (lines 157–58)

[Subtle in manner  
 They kept hidden their secret loves.]

Thus the *sinnekens* are acting not so much as tempters but as observers who spot the moral weakness and are then in a position to exploit it. This theme of deception encapsulated in their names is to prove significant as the play proceeds, but it is partly an internal process by which the lovers are themselves deceived by their own emotions.

The dramatic texture of the Antwerp play differs considerably from that in the Haarlem version. There are more speakers: besides the lovers and the *sinnekens*, the cast includes Thisbe's Mother, her Maid, and the Father of Pyramus. A good deal of the dialogue is actually monologue in which the characters explain and indulge their feelings. Indeed, it looks as though one of the chief aspects of the dramatization is the opportunity for individual actors to show their skill in the performance of these expressive speeches: perhaps this reflects the

requirements of competition. The structure of the play is designed to bring out the working of the fraud and deception embodied in the *sinneken*s, but it is striking that they speak to the characters much less than they do in the Haarlem play. Nor is there any direct reference to the Christian allegory until the disaster has happened and the two lamenting parents draw the moral.

In the action itself the initial position is presented by the lovers who are now grown up and speaking together, but in secret:

Moeten wi secretelic tsamen spreken.  
 Voort aen natuere sendt ons beschamen. (lines 233–34)  
 [We have to speak secretly together.  
 From now on Nature sends us shame.]

This fear of discovery is really the driving force in the plot, and from it arises the deception which is the essential contribution of the *sinneken*s. The lovers separate, agreeing to conceal their love, but already Thisbe's Mother has been told that it is strong and, prompted by the *sinneken*s who warn her about deception (lines 387–401), she instructs the Maid to watch Thisbe in order to preserve her chastity. However *Bedrieghelic Waen* discovers that Thisbe's Mother also foresees a marriage between Thisbe and Pyramus, and this, in an unspecified way, he makes the cause of dissension between the two families, resulting in the development of hostility between them and the prohibition by Pyramus's Father of any contact between the lovers (lines 498–570). As a result of their separation, Thisbe goes into a decline, in spite of an extended plea by the Maid to Thisbe's Mother, and Pyramus, meanwhile, appeals to Venus in her temple for help. It is here that the dramatist extends his rhetorical skill as the two characters show their feelings (lines 778–888 and 889–945). The substance of this causally developed narrative is not to be found in *Metamorphoses*, where the only clue is that they would have been married had not their parents objected (4. 60–61). Things take a significant turn when Thisbe discovers the hole in the wall, and again this is handled differently. Ovid's lovers simply make use of it whereas here the discovery and Thisbe's device of ensuring that Pyramus also finds it by pushing her buckle through as a signal lead to a restoration of contact between the lovers. From this there follows the tryst at the tomb of Ninus. It is notable that the tryst is planned at lines 1118–33. As the play ends at line 1531 it is apparent that much of the dramatist's interest lies in the elaboration of the preparatory circumstantial sequence of over a thousand lines.

Apart from their intervention with Thisbe's Mother, the *sinneken*s stay largely out of sight and make themselves into a kind of framing device. They actually draw attention to the fact that this is an enactment and not a narrative (lines

165–68). They comment on the sexual attractiveness of both lovers and mark the ways in which fraud and deception are seen in the unfolding of events. In particular they wish to encourage false hopes in the lovers:

Al is huerlieder jonste juechdelijck,  
 Sonder arch, oprecht en duechdelijck,  
 Die elc andren noyt en loghen,  
 Nochtans wordense van ons bedroghen. (lines 768–71)

[Even though their love is useful,  
 Innocent, honest, and virtuous,  
 Even though they never lied to each other,  
 Nevertheless we will deceive them.]

However we do not actually see them doing this even though Pyramus is effectively deceived into making a false interpretation in the critical scene at the fountain.

The dramatic climax of the play, closely following Ovid's narrative, is rather brief (lines 1270–1429). The *sinneken*s are used to describe the appearance of the lion, his drinking at the fountain, Thisbe's flight, the dropping of her scarf, and the lion's worrying it. As these events happen they note that the disaster turns upon the bloodied scarf and the false interpretation of it by Pyramus, and his being deceived (lines 1254–58). The despair of Pyramus arising from his mistake over the scarf is extensively portrayed and, as he dies, he blames himself for the supposed death of Thisbe and calls the mulberry a tree of sorrow (line 1345). Thisbe's death speech is also extensive, and just before she kills herself, Pyramus is given a few words which underline his mistake. The *sinneken*s noting the serious lamentation of the relatives again show that fraud and deception have been causes of the disaster and take pride in their own responsibility for what has happened. Satisfied they disappear before the bereaved parents draw out the allegory. Though this is expressed economically, the essentials are those described above in the *Reductorium Morale*, but the secondary interpretation of Thisbe as Mary the Virgin is not included. Nevertheless the idea that compassion is the turning point for redemption is clearly expressed:

O siele, die de gelijckenisse draecht  
 Van Thisbe, wel zijt tanveerdene schuldich  
 Tsweert van Gods passie, om u verduldich  
 In contemplacien te doorsnijdene  
 Uut compassien ende devoten medelijdene:  
 Teeuwighen verblijdene sout ghi dies rijsen. (lines 1521–26)

[O soul who has donned the likeness  
 Of Thisbe, be prepared to accept



The sword of God's passion to pierce you  
 Patiently in contemplation  
 Out of commiseration and from devout compassion:  
 So shall you wake to eternal rejoicing.]

The articulation of this interpretation, though it is added at the end of the play without being anticipated, does in fact accord with the treatment of the narrative in the main part. Because the story is presented with such close attention to causality and motivation, it achieves a kind of credibility: in short the story is made coherent by these devices, and that being so, the moral interpretation is added to concur. It provides an allegory which can match closely the tightly plotted dramatization.

These two Rhetoricians plays in their differing ways show that dramatic techniques can be used to represent both moral issues and also differing readings of the same story. It is apparent too that these very dramatic techniques even though they are working in the same cultural situation are sensitive to different demands. The interplay between cultural traditions and the practice of the stage as we find it in Shakespeare's adaptation of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe makes it a rather special case in his work as a whole as it shows that he was both sensitive to the original version and also interested in ways in which the story could be presented on the stage. To some extent we are hampered in our interpretation of this sequence by Shakespeare because it has become such a set piece of comic drama, an icon which many directors and actors have wanted to try out for themselves. It probably means something quite different to us today from what it might have meant originally because of the theatrical and cultural accretions it has acquired. Moreover it has been subject to intense theatrical attention, and we must be aware too that to explain a joke may be to kill it stone dead.

I have already indicated that Shakespeare followed an English tradition surrounding the Ovid text. To be more specific, it is clear that in addition to some similarities with Chaucer's version, he owed a great deal to Golding's text, for there are many verbal echoes from it. This has been thoroughly explored by Brooks in the Appendix to his edition where he annotates the many examples. One instance may stand here for many: Shakespeare has used the word 'cranny' for the hole in the wall, and this word is Golding's.<sup>15</sup> In broader terms there is

<sup>15</sup> See Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Brooks, pp. 149–53. For this particular example compare 'The wall [. . .] had riven therein a crany' with 'a crannied hole, or chink' (V. 1. 157) and, soon after, 'this the cranny is' (V. 1. 162) where the repetition may suggest that Shakespeare is relishing the word.

also a sense that Shakespeare was in part interested by the humanist and psychological approach of Golding who tells the story with much attention to the mental development of the lovers. The following passage is faithful in many details to Ovid's original, but its discursive style is apparent, perhaps facilitated by Golding's choice of fourteeners:

So faire a man in all the East was none alive as he,  
 Nor nere a woman, maide nor wife in beautie like to hir.  
 This neyghbrod bred acquaintance first, this neyghbrod first did stirre  
 The secret sparkes, this neyghbrod first an entrance did showe,  
 For love to come to that to which it afterward did growe.  
 And if that right had taken place, they had been man and wife,  
 But still their Parents went about to let that which (for their life) [always, prevent  
 They could not let. For both their hearts with equall flame did burne. (Brooks, p. 149)

But Shakespeare also apparently went back to Ovid himself. His inclusion of 'boiling' in 'his boiling bloody breast' recalls Ovid's 'ferventi [. . .] e vulnere' (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, V. I. 146, and *Metamorphoses* 4. 120). When Flute as Thisbe promised to meet Pyramus at 'Ninny's tomb' Shakespeare was probably recalling the Latin, which reads 'ad busta Nini', and which may indeed have led to a schoolboy joke based on the contemporary meaning of Ninny as fool.<sup>16</sup> Peter Quince, like a schoolmaster, makes the correction (III. I. 92–93), but Bottom repeats the error later (V. I. 200). The possibility that Shakespeare did indeed make his own recourse to Ovid is enhanced by the evidence which suggests that the influence of Ovid's work on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was not confined only to the Pyramus and Thisbe episodes as such.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the strongest thematic link, however, is to be found on the part played by magic during the night's adventures in the wood. Not only is Bottom metamorphosed into an ass, but the affections of Titania, Lysander, and Demetrius are all changed by the love juice, which itself has mythical origins. None of these changes has been directly linked with Ovid, yet their effect in bringing about alterations in affections and emotional states seems to be suggestive of so many other changes in the *Metamorphoses*. In this tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, however, Ovid has no

<sup>16</sup> N. Rudd points out that neither of these appear in Golding; see his 'Pyramus and Thisbe in Shakespeare and Ovid', in *Shakespeare's Ovid: The 'Metamorphoses' in the Plays and Poems*, ed. by A. B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 113–26 (pp. 116–17).

<sup>17</sup> See Rudd, 'Pyramus and Thisbe', pp. 118–20, for citations regarding Theseus and Hippolyta, Hermia and Lysander, Oberon and Puck.

changes which could be recognized as metamorphoses, except for the alteration in colour of the fruit of the mulberry.

Shakespeare's dramatization presents us with some interesting features regarding the genre of his version of *Pyramus and Thisbe*. He gives us two forms of the title, as well as Philostrate's description from watching the rehearsal of the play. Quince introduces it as 'The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of *Pyramus and Thisbe*' (I. 2. 11–12). Theseus reads from the list of plays available for his nuptial celebrations the following description: 'A tedious brief scene of young *Pyramus* / And his love *Thisbe*, very tragical mirth' (V. 1. 56–57). These prompt us to consider it as both tragedy and comedy. Philostrate's account reinforces this expectation:

And tragical, my noble lord, it is,  
For *Pyramus* therein doth kill himself;  
Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess  
Made mine eye water; but more merry tears  
The passion of loud laughter never shed. (V. 1. 66–70)

Such deliberate preparation by Shakespeare should not escape us. Notwithstanding the possible parodying of earlier interlude-tragedies like Thomas Preston's *Cambises*, this suggests that he wants us to think of the play as being of both genres simultaneously. In the event this turns out to be a viable approach. For all the comic exaggeration and ineptitude in both the text and the performance of 'Pyramus and Thisbe', the tragic circumstances of the story, inherent in Ovid despite his somewhat detached attitude, are carefully preserved and re-presented. The passionate suffering of the two lovers and the high emotional pitch of their encounters are unmistakable. The fact that their ultimate misfortune is due to the unfortunate mistiming of their rendezvous is the turning point of their disaster. Looking beyond this version we find there is also the striking circumstance that Shakespeare rarely overlooked the part played by unexpected chance in his tragedies, and there is a close parallel to 'Pyramus and Thisbe' in *Romeo and Juliet* (written at roughly the same time) where the final disaster actually turns upon two misfortunes: the failure of the message about the plans for the simulation of Juliet's death to reach Romeo, and the mischance that Romeo mistakenly kills himself only a few moments before Juliet revives, ready to be reunited with him. The tragic parallel between these two stories is further enhanced by the initial circumstances that the two pairs of lovers happen to come from feuding families, and that an attempted union was expressly against the wishes of their parents. In both dramatizations the settings and the outturn of events are heavy with fateful misfortune, but this palpable sense of fate is closely interwoven with

the crushing effect of parental intractability. This theme is also present in the main plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the form of Egeus's prohibition of his daughter Hermia's wish to marry Lysander rather than Demetrius. This is one of the ways by which 'Pyramus and Thisbe' functions as an appropriate closing entertainment for the main play, as we shall consider below.

Perhaps the strategy at work here is that we are at first encouraged by the titles and by Philostrate's reaction to approach the mechanicals' play in a spirit of ridicule, and then, subjected to the severity of their passion and the cruelty of their misfortunes, we are surprised, dramatically, that our sympathy for them emerges. To induce such a change of perception in the audience is, I suggest, one of Shakespeare's most remarkable skills. In the complexity of the dramatization, one of the key factors of the performance is that the mechanicals themselves take their performance very seriously: they are more than anxious to please and there does not appear to be any element of self-ridicule in what occurs on the stage. This may be enhanced by the narrative circumstance that for all their suffering the characterization of Pyramus and Thisbe makes them appear innocent, if not ingenuous. Another significant controlling feature seems to be the onstage audience of courtiers. Though some of their comments are possibly well meant, an undertone of condescension on their part changes the context in which the mechanicals' performance is given, and moves the real audience in the direction of reassessment and sympathy. Perhaps it is here that the use of the word 'comedy' in the designation of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' becomes more significant. The real audience is being placed in a position of superior knowledge about what is happening on the stage. There is thus a delicate interplay between ridicule and sympathy.

Shakespeare's version is notable for his mockery of literalism in the play and especially in the performance. The text of the play itself and the preparation for it brings out the question of how to make things real on the stage. Initially it seems that the mechanicals will be satisfied with Bottom's idea that the real moon be allowed to shine in through the casement (III. 1. 52–54), but in the event Starveling takes on the role in the performance, and his defence against the fanciful criticism of the watching courtiers is that 'I am the Man i'th'Moon; this thorn-bush is my thorn-bush; and this dog my dog' (V. 1. 147–49). Thus there is again a procedure by which Shakespeare returns to an idea he has already initiated. The same feature occurs with the Wall who is described in the rehearsal scene (III. 1. 63–67) and appears accordingly in the performance itself with an appropriate explanation (V. 1. 154–63). As for the Lion, the necessity that he must be realistic is beset with the need not to be terrifying. He must be a proper lion,

with nails unpared, but a special speech is anticipated, created in the interim and performed in order to prevent panic among the ladies.<sup>18</sup> In the performance the actuality of moon, lion, and wall is conveyed partly through the observation of the onstage witnesses:

|           |                                                            |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| DEMETRIUS | Well roared, Lion.                                         |
| THESEUS   | Well run, Thisbe.                                          |
| HIPPOLYTA | Well shone, Moon! Truly the moon shines with a good grace. |
| THESEUS   | Well moused, Lion! (V. I. 254–58)                          |

These mechanisms, whereby the audience are asked to be aware of the nature of theatrical illusion and are invited to perceive the incompetence of the mechanicals in their attempts to realize it, run alongside the perception of the tragic/comic mode of 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. Together they no doubt increase our enjoyment of the mechanicals' sequences, not least because we are being asked to respond at different levels. They are important contributing factors to our response to the text which Shakespeare has actually created for the mechanicals to perform.

This text is, indeed, somewhat Protean in form since we see and hear some scraps of it before the final performance, and the match is not exactly perfect. When Peter Quince allocates the parts, he makes Starveling Thisbe's mother, Snout Pyramus's father, and himself Thisbe's father (I. 2. 56–59). This proposed casting reflects the original version of the story, and we have noted scenes in which two of these characters appear in the Antwerp play. They no doubt reflect the theme of parental prohibition in the original, but for some reason Shakespeare was content to make the suggestion at this point without following it up. In the event Starveling plays the part of the Moon.<sup>19</sup>

The lines which are practised in the rehearsal scene by the two lovers do not reappear in the final performance. This brief passage establishes Flute's timidity ('Must I speak now?' III. I. 84), and shows us Bottom's blunder over 'odious', which is rapidly corrected by Quince.<sup>20</sup> The action which we may presume

<sup>18</sup> See III. I. 26–44, IV. 2. 38, and V. I. 214–21. Bottom's proposed phrase 'it were pity of my life' reappears in the words ultimately spoken by the Lion.

<sup>19</sup> This textual inconsistency is open to differing explanations. One, followed by Brooks in his note to I. 2. 59, is that Shakespeare had not envisaged the way he would present 'Pyramus and Thisbe' in the last act, and that he did not come back and carry out the revision, the inconsistency being hardly likely to be noticed.

<sup>20</sup> Rudd, 'Pyramus and Thisbe', p. 116, points out that 'odorous' is close to Golding's translation: the lovers stood on either side of the wall 'often drawing one of them the pleasant breath from other'.

accompanies the ten lines of text is difficult to reconcile with the action of the play as performed later. Apparently Pyramus goes off 'to see a noise which he has heard' (III. 1. 86), but there is no apparent reason for this, except that it enables the ass-head to be fitted. However his return is made more plausible in the actors' text if his line is repunctuated: 'If I were, fair Thisbe, I were only thine' (III. 1. 97) instead of 'If I were fair, Thisbe, I were only thine.' The latter makes a joke about Bottom's altered appearance, but Bottom distorts the intended sense because he misunderstands. The former reading, however, is an appropriate response to Thisbe's 'As true as truest horse that never yet would tire' (III. 1. 91), which Quince insists really is the cue for Pyramus to return. Once again we can say, at the risk of tearing the joke to pieces, that Shakespeare is cleverly moving between two levels of meaning: that which works within the dialogue of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' and that which is apprehended by the audience as applying to the world of Bottom and his fellow actors, external to their play.

By the time it reaches the final performance the mechanicals' play has acquired a number of preliminaries and it also shows a style of theatrical realization which is worth comment. Of the three preliminary speeches the second, spoken by Peter Quince, reveals that the performance begins with a dumbshow, which may indeed have several phases (V. 1. 126–50). First the lovers are presented, then the Wall, and then Moonshine, as he is now called. This is followed by a summary of the story, whose climax is the alliterative description of the death of Pyramus:

Whereat with blade, with bloody blameful blade,  
He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast. (V. 1. 145–46)

This in itself anticipates the use of alliteration which is so heavy in the subsequent dialogue. But since this Prologue begins by pointing at the characters in turn, it seems highly likely that the actors might have given some kind of visual accompaniment, perhaps in a tableau or two. However there is no direct evidence for this.

Once it begins, the play of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' has two scenes. The first is the passionate conversation through the wall, and the second the tragic sequel at the tomb. As Pyramus begins by lamenting that Thisbe is late in coming to the wall, the presumption is that they meet there by prearrangement. His speech takes place at night and it is immediately rich in foreboding 'O grim looked night! O night with hue so black!' (V. 1. 168). There is no special reason for a night meeting except perhaps this rhetorically useful one. His ludicrous but hopeful address to the 'sweet and lovely wall', whom he thanks for courteously extending the chink, goes back to both Golding and Ovid. In the latter the

lovers first blame the wall for enviously separating them, but then admit that they have a debt to it for allowing them to communicate through the hole (4. 73–78). Thus the personification of the wall as someone who could be thanked is incipient in Ovid, perhaps another of the comic aspects we have noted in his version. It may also lie behind the monologue of Snout as Wall (V. 1. 154–63). Golding, however, gives Shakespeare another and more immediate prompt: ‘we thinke ourselves in det / For the same piece of *courtesie*’.<sup>21</sup> Once Thisbe enters, the dialogue, for all its ineptitude, is remarkably concise. In sixteen lines, some of which are in the form of stichomythia, the lovers communicate, kiss the wall’s hole, pay compliments to the watching courtiers, and set up the rendezvous at the tomb (V. 1. 186–201). This may be bad poetry, but it does follow poetic convention, and it works as a sharply effective passage of dialogue. Shakespeare keeps up the ridicule of his protagonists. Pyramus, as he recognizes Thisbe, sees a voice, and this echoes Peter Quince in the rehearsal scene, giving the reason for Bottom’s exit to the hesitating Flute (III. 1. 86 and V. 1. 190).

The ownership of the text of ‘Pyramus and Thisbe’ is an intriguing question and it adds something to the quality of the dramatization. It is often assumed that Peter Quince wrote it. There is certainly the possibility of adding to it, as Bottom suggests for the Lion’s part, which was originally ‘nothing but roaring’; and indeed by the time of the performance Snug’s speech has grown to eight lines of self-explanation. When he first hears of the play, Bottom declares that it is a very good piece of work and a merry. But his knowledge of it is somewhat limited, for when the parts are given out it transpires that he does not know whether Pyramus is a lover or a tyrant. The metrics of the text are, to say the least, varied and may reflect upon the competence of the author, whoever he may have been. Bottom suggests that Wall’s Prologue be in eight and six, by which he means ballad stanza, but it is eventually realized in heroic couplets some of whose rhymes are imperfect (Thisbe/secretly, sinister/whisper). The same is true of the Prologue which is in quatrains with some clumsy rhymes (plain/certain, breast/rest, and possibly know/woo). The line about the Lion is extrametric (V. 1. 138). The climactic speeches of the lovers, those in which Pyramus and Thisbe kill themselves (V. 1. 265–76, 284–95, and 311–33 respectively), are indeed in eight and six (or fourteeners), but each of the ‘eights’ is embellished by an internal rhyme, which can best be appreciated if the verses are set out thus:

Come tears, confound! Out sword and wound  
The pap of Pyramus;

<sup>21</sup> Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, ed. by Brooks, p. 150.

Ay that left pap, where heart doth hop  
 Thus die I, thus, thus, thus! (V. 1. 284–89)

There is not much doubt that pap/hop is an imperfect rhyme, however, and confound/wound may not have been very good either, though there is a possibility that sound shift has made this difficult to determine. Pyramus's last line is a metrical triumph (or coup de grâce); the trimeter reads, 'Now die, die, die, die, die' (V. 1. 295). This recall of the traditional metre both for narrative and for dramatic verse is begun by Pyramus at the point where, having reached the tomb and having found that Thisbe is not yet there (in a quatrain), he discovers the mantle and is overcome by passion. Shakespeare here does not make the choice of the Antwerp playwright and dwell upon Pyramus's mistake: his interest is in the emotional tone. The fourteeners are enhanced by the proliferation of alliteration, as well as by the insistence upon imagery, all in the same metre:

These lily lips, this cherry nose,  
 These yellow cowslip cheeks  
 Are gone, are gone! Lovers, make moan  
 His eyes were green as leeks. (V. 1. 317–22)

If Ovid was remarkable for his exploitation of the techniques of poetic rhetoric, Shakespeare's version follows his lead, even though parody is a much stronger ingredient. In effect all this reflects upon the mechanicals and their possible authorship.

The comments by the courtiers are interestingly directed to the emotional content of the play they are witnessing. Their implication is that no one could possibly feel any emotion in the presence of such a performance: as Theseus puts it 'This passion and the death of a dear friend would go near to make a man look sad' (V. 1. 277–78). Yet Shakespeare is indeed depending upon the fact that this is a highly emotional story, and his text constantly seeks to express emotion through both the poetic devices we have been discussing and also through the actions which accompany the events enacted. The selection of incidents reinforces this. It is apparent that the lovers use the same sword, and that their blows accompany the passionate words. In fact the performance opportunity offered by Shakespeare's text seems to turn upon how far the intentions, aspirations, and verbal and acting skills of the mechanicals work together to make a ludicrous impression. The comedy does not consist only of laughter; it stimulates a contrary feeling which may ask what exactly we are laughing at. 'Pyramus and Thisbe' would not be funny if it were not meant to be serious, and the links between it and the adventures of the four lovers in the wood at night underline its role in the play as a whole. Such a connection is enhanced because the adventures



in the wood put love at the mercy of love juice and more than once make us see love as ridiculous, shallow, and as a form of folly. The tragedy of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' is a realization of what might have happened to the lovers in the wood, and the stylistic diversity between the two points this up remarkably.

In this study I have considered a variety of differences between these three dramatizations of Ovid's narrative. Perhaps the most surprising thing, however, is not the diversity discussed here but that the power of Ovid's story and his treatment of it should be so clearly traceable in all three.

## GOD, GODS, HUMANS, AND *SINNEKENS* IN CLASSICAL RHETORICIANS PLAYS

Elsa Strietman

As in other European cultures, classical stories and classical gods were used in the medieval literature and the arts of the Low Countries long before the Renaissance. One of the earliest surviving epic texts is Hendrik van Veldeke's *Eneide* (c. 1170), and Aeneas, among other classical heroes and gods, continued to be an attractive subject.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the use of classical material was simply a shorthand reference to exemplary virtues, courage, strength, and nobility. Of great importance however was the interest in constructing links between the rulers of Troy and Rome and successive European emperors, kings, and other rulers. The tracing of the connections between one's ancestors and the very beginnings of the pagan, and subsequently the Christian, Roman Empire was a favourite device in strengthening claims to power and the elevation of ruling dynasties. Texts of various genres demonstrate this and it is my purpose, amongst other aspects, to explore this phenomenon in dramatic texts of the sixteenth century, particularly in works by Jan Smeecken and Cornelis van Ghistele.

To begin with some minor examples, part of the earliest surviving drama of the Low Countries consists of four secular romantic plays, the *abele spelen*.<sup>2</sup> In these, the exotic nature of remote countries is suggested by characters who call

<sup>1</sup> Heinrich von Veldeke, *Eneasroman*, *Mittelhochdeutsch/Neuhochdeutsch*, Nach dem text von Ludwig Ettmüller ins Neuhochdeutsche übersetzt von Dieter Kartschoke (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1986); L. J. Rogier, *Henric van Veldeken* (Maastricht: Leiter-Nypels NV, 1931).

<sup>2</sup> *De abele spelen naar het Hulthemse handschrift*, ed. by L. van Kammen (Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep, 1968). *Netherlandic Secular Plays from the Middle Ages: The 'Abele Spelen' and the Farces of the Hulthem Manuscript*, ed. and trans. by Theresia de Vroom, Carleton Renaissance Plays in Translation, 29 (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1997).

on their gods, although this may be regarded as window dressing. For instance, alongside *Apollijn* we find *Mahomet*, and various unidentified but foreign-sounding deities, such as *Termagant*, were used for the same purpose. In one of these plays, *Tspel vanden Winter ende vanden Somer* (*The Play of the Winter and the Summer*), Lady Venus has an important role as arbiter in a conflict between Winter and Summer. There she is not so much the Goddess of Love but a personification of the balancing qualities of the planet Venus.<sup>3</sup> An interesting aspect of her mediation is that she champions God's plan with the world and refers to the explanations of 'the astronomers':

God die ghemaect heeft water ende wijn  
 Ende al dat men ter werelt vint,  
 Hi heeft ghemaect dat firmament  
 Ende .vii. planeten daer ane gheset  
 Ende daer toe .xii. teken met.  
 Dese hebbent al in haer behout  
 Si makent heet, si makent cout  
 Dese doent winter ende somer wesen,  
 Als ons die astrominen lesen.  
 Deen es cout, die ander heet,  
 Nemmermeer dat stille en steet:  
 Het moet winter of somer sijn;  
 Somtijt dat hete sonnenschijn,  
 Somtijt den haghel ende couden snee.  
 Dit en sal vergaen nemmermee.  
 Soe langhe als die werelt sal dueren  
 Sal elck werken nae sijn nature,  
 Want god hevet alsoe gheset  
 Worde enich van beiden belet  
 Somer of winter dier ghelijc  
 Al dat es op eertrijc  
 Soude vervaren ende vergaen  
 Blevē die tijt al stille staen:  
 Deen en mach sonder die ander niet wesen. (lines 558–81)

[God who has made water and wine  
 And all that is to be found on earth,  
 Has also made the firmament  
 In which He set seven planets

<sup>3</sup> H. van Dijk, "Als ons die astrominen lesen": Over het abel spel *Vanden Winter ende vanden Somer*, in *Tusentijds: Bundel studies aangeboden aan W. P. Gerritsen ter gelegenheid van zijn vijftigste verjaardag*, ed. by A. M. J. van Buuren (Utrecht: HES, 1985), pp. 56–70.

And added twelve signs to these.  
 These have power over everything:  
 They create heat, they create cold,  
 They create summer as well as winter  
 As the astronomers teach us.  
 Winter is cold, summer is hot  
 And things are always changing:  
 It's either summer or it's winter,  
 Sometimes there is hot sunshine,  
 Sometimes hail and cold snow.  
 This will never change  
 As long as the world exists  
 And each will act according to his nature  
 For God has ordained it thus.  
 If either of them would be hindered,  
 Be it summer or winter,  
 Then all things on earth  
 Would be affected.  
 Even if time would come to a standstill,  
 The one cannot be without the other.]<sup>4</sup>

This is but one example of the intricate intermingling of Christian teaching and astrological influence on the fate of man which pervades literature and the arts from late antiquity right through the medieval and the early modern period, and beyond.<sup>5</sup> In *Vanden Winter ende vanden Somer* Venus, more in her planetary form than in that of the Goddess of Love, is judging the combatants according to the will of God. The influence of the planets too is ascribed to God and will last only as long as He decides. In the classical plays under discussion there is a strong emphasis on the planetary aspects of the gods, though the power of God is not as explicitly present as in for instance *Vanden Winter ende vanden Somer*.<sup>6</sup>

As a goddess, Venus continues to be a presence in a variety of texts that do not otherwise make use of classical material. They employ her as a cliché; for instance, lovers' actions and emotions are often explained by the fact that 'twas Lady Venus who advised him/her/them'. Venus is also used in complex ways

<sup>4</sup> *De abele spelen*, ed. by van Kammen, pp. 236–37.

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Coleman, “‘Waer met nu meest elck Rymer SOO pronckelijc pracht’: Antieke goden als sprekende personages op het rederijkerstoneel”, *Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Soevereine Hoofdkamer van Retorica ‘De Fonteyne’ te Gent*, 49–50 (1999–2000), 95–132 (pp. 120–23).

<sup>6</sup> J. E. van Gijsen, *Liefde, Kosmos en Verbeelding: Mens en Wereldbeeld in Colijn van Rijssels Spiegel der minnen* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff/Forsten, 1992), passim.

with reference to the intricacies of the whole process of loving. This occurs for instance in Hendrik van Veldeke's *Eneide* which is much indebted to Ovidian imagery.<sup>7</sup> A later and well-known example is *Le Roman de la Rose* and all its versions, adaptations, and translations in other European languages. In the Low Countries there are two surviving adaptations of this corpus.<sup>8</sup> In these, Venus's own adventures feature prominently and they also find a place in some later dramatic texts. In such plays from the Low Countries she appears both in comedy and in more serious contexts.<sup>9</sup>

The sixteenth-century plays of the Rhetoricians promote the Triumph of the Ancients. The poetry and drama guilds of the Rhetoricians dominated the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century literature of the Low Countries: some six hundred of their plays have survived and no doubt many have perished. We now have some fifty plays which employ, in varying degrees, classical material, and thirty-nine of these include classical gods amongst their characters.<sup>10</sup>

The majority of these plays are serious in intent, though comedy has its place in them, and more than half are accompanied by the genre description of *spel*

<sup>7</sup> For instance in that part where the Queen of Latium instructs her daughter Lavinia in the secrets of love and warns her that she must not fall in love with their enemy, Aeneas: von Veldeke, *Eneasroman*, pp. 545–58, and Rogier, *Henric van Veldeken*, pp. 173–78. For Venus's role in igniting Dido's passion for Aeneas, using similar Ovidian imagery, see Kartschoke, *Eneasroman*, pp. 46–53.

<sup>8</sup> *Die Rose van Heinric van Aken*, ed. by E. Verwijs (repr., Utrecht: HES, 1976); K. Heeroma, *De fragmenten van de tweede Rose* (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1958). For a discussion of the two adaptations, see D. E. van der Poel, *De Vlaamse Rose en Die Rose van Heinric* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1989), passim.

<sup>9</sup> Comic aspects are for instance prominent in *Mars ende Venus* (see below). In a more serious context Venus plays a part in, for instance, the late fifteenth-century *De Spiegel der Minnen* and *Van Narcissus ende Echo*. These are both written by Colijn van Rijsssele, a.k.a. Colijn Keyart and as Colijn Caillieu, the official town poet of Brussels (1474–85) and *factor* of the Brussels Chamber of Rhetoric *De leliebroeders* (The brothers of the Lily) until his death in 1503. See Annelies van Gijsen, 'De amoureuze spelen: De herschepping van klassieke stof op het rederijkerstoneel', in *Spel en spektakel: Middeleeuws toneel in de Lage Landen*, ed. by H. van Dijk and B. Ramakers, NLCM, 23 (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2001), pp. 215–27; Anke van Herk, 'Dieu et les dieux dans la pièce de théâtre *Van Narcissus ende Echo* de Colijn Keyart' (forthcoming) and 'Parental Power and Authority in the Amorous Plays of the Sixteenth Century' (forthcoming). I would like to express my gratitude to Dr van Herk who allowed me to read both these articles prior to their inclusion in her dissertation: 'De amoureuze spelen van de rederijkers' (Amsterdam, forthcoming).

<sup>10</sup> These are listed in the useful article by Coleman, 'Antieke goden', pp. 129–31.

*van sinne* (morality play). Some are labelled *esbatement*, an uncertain term sometimes used in the sense of ‘entertainment’ but not to be interpreted as necessarily without a serious purpose.<sup>11</sup>

It is not easy to determine when classical material ceased to be used for its exemplary value and became part of the consciousness of humanism and the Renaissance. We must, I think, look at the Rhetoricians, their plays, their stages, and their productions for processions, as not sharply divided between ‘medieval’ and ‘Renaissance’. It is quite clear that in the processional culture, in particular in the architectural and visual aspects, classical elements are used frequently and certainly from as early as the 1450s onwards, if not earlier. In the competitions of the Rhetoricians, the architectural design of the stages, for instance at Gent in 1539, is wholly in the classical mode of the triumphal arch. If we investigate *De Spiegel der minnen* and *Van Narcissus ende Echo* for their awareness of the human condition and for their mode of expression, then we encounter a new sensibility. Van Dijk and Ramakers formulate this in connection with Van Gijsen’s research into the amorous classical plays:

Van Gijsen shows that early humanist ideas [. . .] influence both the concept of love and its expression in the characters and in the mise en scène of some amorous plays. In so doing she adds a new argument as evidence for the thesis that the Renaissance in Dutch literature did not begin after the Rhetoricians but with the Rhetoricians — and that already in the fifteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

With that in mind, I should like to explore a different use of gods and goddesses which can be considered a more deliberate and sensitive mode than was common with medieval writers. The cluster of surviving plays based on classical stories with a love relationship dates from the late fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth

<sup>11</sup> Coleman, ‘Antieke goden’, pp. 103, 113–15, discusses the predominantly comic role of gods such as Momus, Pan, and Bacchus. To suggest, as Coleman does, that there is a serious separation between the *spel van sinne* (morality play) as a serious dramatic form and the *esbatement* as a comic form is, however, too stark. Comic elements are an inherent aspect of the *sinnekens* wherever they occur in the different forms of Rhetoricians drama. An illustrative example of the use of the term *esbatement* is that in *Een esbatement van sMenschen Sin ende Verganckelijcke Schoonheit* in which elaborate comedy forms the wrapping for a very serious moral message: the pursuit of sexual gratification and luxurious living will end in eternal damnation. See *Een Esbatement van sMenschen Sin en Verganckelijcke Schoonheit / Man’s Desire and Fleeting Beauty*, ed. and trans. by Elsa Strietman and Robert Potter (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> Van Gijsen, *Spel en spektakel*, p. 28. My translation from the Dutch.

century.<sup>13</sup> Mars and Venus, Leander and Hero, Jupiter and Io, Narcissus and Echo, Aeneas and Dido, Pyramus and Thisbe were well-known pairs of lovers, either Ovidian or Virgilian, and all of them were familiar from other European contemporary literature and arts. The two plays about Pyramus and Thisbe differ from the rest in that they are not concerned with classical gods but have an explicit Christian allegory.<sup>14</sup>

The early dates of origin of these plays might suggest a pre-Renaissance 'consciousness', but in fact it is possible to detect an anticipation of Renaissance awareness. The general consensus is that in the literary culture of the Low Countries the early Renaissance does not begin to make itself felt until the last quarter of the sixteenth century. There is some uncertainty about the exact definitions of the differences in structure and dramaturgy between Rhetoricians plays and early Renaissance drama. For instance, Meeus and Fleurkens note a period of gradual transformation between the late sixteenth and the first quarter of the seventeenth century. A number of plays adhere to certain Rhetoricians features, such as the explicit emphasis on the moral and didactic message of the play, whilst introducing aspects of Renaissance drama, such as a chorus or a greater incidence of violence shown on the stage.<sup>15</sup> However, as Van Gijsen has convincingly shown, awareness of early humanist ideas shaped the concept of love in some of the amorous classical plays and especially in *De Spiegel der Minnen*. The latter, notwithstanding the fact that its pair of lovers is 'bourgeois' and con-

<sup>13</sup> Annelies van Gijsen, 'De tussenspelen uit de twee *Handels der Amo(ureusheyt)*', in *Spel in de verte: Tekst, structuur en opvoeringspraktijk van het rederijkerstoneel*, ed. by B. A. M. Ramakers (Gent: De Fonteyne, 1994), pp. 59–86, suggests that *Narcissus ende Echo* dates from the late fifteenth century and is therefore the oldest of this group. *Spiegel der minnen*, written by Colijn van Rijsssele, and *Mars ende Venus*, written by Jan Smeecken, date from the same period. Van Gijsen sees *Van Eneas ende Dido* (1552) as a 'solitary latecomer' in this series.

<sup>14</sup> In the group of plays which feature classical lovers, the two Pyramus and Thisbe plays are firmly anchored in a medieval tradition by the analysis of their allegorical significance: their human tragic fate is completely subservient to the Christian message imposed on the story by the authors. The only modern edition so far is *Piramus en Thisbe: Twee rederijkersspelen uit de zestiende eeuw*, ed. by G. A. van Es (Zwolle: Tjeenk-Willink, 1965). See also *For Pleasure and Profit: Six Dutch Rhetoricians Plays*, ed. and trans. by Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé (forthcoming) which, besides the two Piramus texts, contains *Hue Mars en Venus tsaemen bueleerden*.

<sup>15</sup> Hubert Meeus, 'Verschillen in structuur en dramaturgie tussen het rederijkerstoneel en het vroege renaissance drama: Poging tot het schetsen van een ontwikkeling', in *Spel in de verte*, ed. by Ramakers, pp. 97–118, and A. C. G. Fleurkens, 'De gelegenheid maakt het spel? Enkele beschouwingen over verschillen in structuur tussen het rederijkerstoneel en het vroege renaissance drama', in *ibid.*, pp. 119–28.

temporary, not classical and/or divine, can legitimately be compared with and discussed in the context of the amorous classical plays.

This small corpus shows various modes of behaviour: gods who are all too human, as in *Mars en Venus*, in their pursuit of lust and love; gods who interfere with and punish mortals, as in *Leander en Hero*; gods whose conflicts and enmity determine the fate of humans, as in *Eneas en Dido*; gods who foolishly persist in a course of action which is doomed to failure, as in *Narcissus en Echo*; and gods embroiled in marital strife and adultery, as in *Jupiter en Yo*.<sup>16</sup> All these stories in the hands of the Rhetoricians became moral exempla, demonstrations of human folly, wrath, sexual jealousy, and power politics. The human characters in these plays may be driven, inspired, or plagued by the deities, but divine characters are shown to be no less beset by forces stronger than themselves. Some of the plays feature mainly divine characters; some mingle divine and human characters. In all of them, however, there is another category of players, the allegorical personifications which are typical of Rhetoricians drama and amongst these in particular there are the *sinnekens*, allegorical embodiments of negative aspects of mankind. Their presence provides the plays with a particular tension: they originate in a theocentric world view in which the Christian God's might is challenged by the forces of evil, embodied in Lucifer and his devils. On the Rhetoricians stage, the *sinnekens* are often portrayed as Lucifer's servants. They are, however, aware that their evil influence, like that of their master, will be ultimately curtailed, even undone, by God and the sacrifice of His Son. Even in plays where the *sinnekens'* ploys succeed and mankind goes unredeemed, the awareness of their limitations is always in the background; their power and that of Satan exists, in a sense, only so long as God does not interfere. By attempting to influence and to tempt mankind, the *sinnekens* are therefore the strongest indicators of that which is good, namely the opposite of all that they propose and try to generate.

The portrayal of God on the Rhetoricians stage is seldom direct. Apart from the *Bliscapen*, mystery plays, of the 1440s and a few late fifteenth-century plays, God is represented by allegorical characters which obliquely show aspects of His

<sup>16</sup> 'Hue Mars ende Venus tsaemen bueleerden: Rederijkersspel uitgegeven naar MS II 368 Kon. Bibl. Brussel', ed. by I. van de Wyer, in *Uut goeder jonsten: Opstellen aangeboden aan L. Roose* ed. by K. Porteman (Leuven: ACCO, 1984), pp. 33–92. H. van Dijk and F. Kramer provide an edition of the text with a translation into modern Dutch: 'Hue Mars ende Venus tsaemen bueleerden', in *Europees toneel van Middeleeuwen naar Renaissance*, ed. by M. Gosman (Groningen: Boek Werk, 1991), pp. 229–302. For *Van Eneas ende Dido*, see 'Van Eneas en Dido: Twee amoureuze spelen uit de zestiende eeuw uitgegeven met inleiding en aantekeningen', ed. and trans. by K. Iwema, *Jaarboek 'De Fontaine'*, 22–23 (1982–83), passim.



Being, *Goodts Goetheijt* (Gods Goodness) or even by an unseen *Stemme Goodts* (Voice of God).<sup>17</sup> Both the forces of good and the forces of evil are increasingly embodied as characters in their own right. This results in the forces of good being presented in stage directions as dignified, stately, learned, wise, simple, honest. The *sinnekens*, in costume, in name, in easily identifiable language, become disassociated from the idea of external evil forces to which mankind can point as instigators of sin. Instead they are represented as a part of human nature, and it is mankind's duty and responsibility to resist them.

In plays where the overt link with a theocentric world view is absent there is a diminished sense of God's overall plan for the world. *Sinnekens* in such plays are less promoters of a satanic plan than the skilful manipulators of negative human inclinations.<sup>18</sup> There are few Rhetoricians plays which contain both classical gods and the Christian God. The exception is a number of late sixteenth-century plays where classical gods are used as conventional allegories. Mars in particular is used as the allegorical embodiment of War, Venus as that of Love, and in plays without God the *sinnekens* therefore seem to have an independent *modus operandi*.

In what follows I shall discuss how the various interactions of these dramatic forces are presented together with different uses of classical gods. I shall review the consequences this has for their portrayal, for the functions of the *sinnekens*, and for the interaction between gods, humans, and *sinnekens*.

In the work of the Brussels Rhetorician Jan Smeecken (active 1485–1517) we find varied uses of classical material and deities. This is already apparent when Smeecken writes a eulogizing play for the Joyous Entry into Brussels in 1515 of

<sup>17</sup> For instance in Lauris Jansz., *Vanden Eenvoudige Mensch (Of simple mankind)*, in *Trou Moet Blijcken: Bronnenuitgave van de Boeken der Haarlemse rederijkerskamer 'de Pellicanisten'*, ed. by W. N. M. Husken, B. A. M. Ramakers, and F. A. M. Schaars (Assen: Quarto, 1996), VI: *Boek F*, fols 93<sup>v</sup>–109<sup>v</sup>, lines 1085–1196. A frequently employed means of showing God, as well as other figures and situations, is the *tooch*, a painting or tableau vivant which is revealed by drawing curtains back or by lowering it down against the backdrop of the stage. This, for instance, occurs in the two Pyramus and Thisbe plays where the allegory of Christ's suffering is explained with the help of a *tooch*. In *sMenschen Sin* (see note 11) an image is shown to the frivolous lovers: Death is poised with his spear to strike and the visual image is strengthened by a verbal, painted message explaining the fate of all those who only live for earthly, physical gratification.

<sup>18</sup> This is the case, for instance, in *Mars ende Venus* (see below) where the narrative is limited to the emotions portrayed on the stage and the possible consequences in quasi-human terms.

Charles V, a play that celebrates him as *Hertoghe Karle ons keyser nu es* (*Duke Charles who is now our Emperor*). Here Mars, Vulcan, Venus, Cupid, Jupiter, Mercury, Diana, and other classical personages such as Prometheus, Vesta, Proserpina, Echo, Ganymede, Ylius, and Berechimia all have a function. A festive play honouring Charles without this panoply of classical characters would have been perfectly possible.<sup>19</sup> Smeecken clearly decided that classical material was in keeping with honouring the sovereign. In fact, beginning in the fifteenth century, and throughout the sixteenth, royal entries and processions make lavish use of classical material.<sup>20</sup>

In *Hue Mars en Venus tsaemen bueleerden* (*How Mars and Venus dallied together*) Smeecken put on stage a group of classical gods and goddesses whose behaviour and language is far from divine and whose marital and extramarital concerns and problems are nothing if not human. His purpose was, amongst others, to show the disastrous effect of mismatched marriage partners and loose sexual behaviour, a concern that formed the subject of quite a few Rhetoricians plays in the course of the sixteenth century.<sup>21</sup> The Rhetoricians wrote and performed their plays for mainly urban audiences in towns whose lifeblood was

<sup>19</sup> J. B. Drewes, 'Een esbattement ter ere van Keizer Karel V', *Jaarboek 'De Fonteyne'*, 18 (1968), 95–114. G. Kipling, *The Triumph of Honour: Burgundian Origins of the Elizabethan Renaissance*, Publications of the Sir Thomas Browne Institute, Leiden, General Series, 6 (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1977) gives numerous examples of what might be termed the 'Renaissance' splendour of Philip the Good, for instance in Philip's 'modelling' himself and his closest advisors on Jason and the Argonauts.

<sup>20</sup> See also G. Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy, and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) in particular for Philip the Good and the Emperor Charles V.

<sup>21</sup> Sexual mores and particularly the disastrous consequences of the flaunting of conventions with regard to sexual behaviour and relationships between the sexes are central concerns in the four serious *abele spelen* and the *sotternien* (see above) and in general in farces. It is difficult to form a sense of a 'development' in or the frequency of the presentation of sexual mores. Few dramatic texts survive from the fifteenth century compared to the abundance of sixteenth-century Rhetoricians plays. See W. N. M. Hüskens, *Noyt meerder vreucht: Compositie en structuur van het komische toneel in de Nederlanden voor de Renaissance*, Deventer Studiën, 3 (Deventer: Sub Rosa, 1987), pp. 22–30. Sexual behaviour is not infrequently a concern in Rhetoricians plays, either as a concern about 'suitability of partners', about the dangers of being carried away by passion, or, as frequently but not exclusively, in the plays of Lauris Jansz., where the lure of sexuality forms part of the many dangers that prevent mankind living according to God's commandments and thereby bringing great social, political, and moral misery upon itself.

trade, commerce, and manufacture. The striving middle classes were concerned with their social and financial status, so that mismatched alliances could be deadly for both. Smeecken's divine comedy employs the inhabitants of Mount Olympus and their sexual shenanigans as an apt and useful allegorical device to embody his very human message and to create entertainment. Any offence the play's outspoken content and language might have caused could safely be defused by the fact that the characters were supernatural and at the same time, if gods behaved like this, what chance did mortal man have to stay on the straight and narrow?

The play in a sense condones the adultery between Mars and Venus because Venus's marriage to Vulcan, 'the ugliest, most hideous, most insensitive, most contemptible of all gods, black, dirty, filthy and most unfeeling' is shown to be an abominable mismatch.<sup>22</sup> Vulcan's incompatibility is extensively described: the most encompassing factors are that he is 'emotionally challenged' but also that he has absolutely nothing to commend him in appearance. Mars wins without having to try: he understands the needs of women and he is gorgeous! The emphasis on his *savoir faire*, his exquisite appearance, is for all times but must also have had special importance for those in an environment where many people were 'on the make' and eagerly copying their 'betters'.

The play about Mars and Venus is not dissimilar in its use of classical material though the Olympic setting is used to illustrate a contemporary concern: the importance of proper alliances, the disastrous consequences of mismatched alliances, morally, socially, and practically. This, however, is a cheerfully pagan play without so much as a hint of a theocentric world view: order and disorder are wholly seen as human concerns. That is the crucial difference from the Pyra-

<sup>22</sup> VENUS: Ja, in trouwen

Ick hebbe den lelijksten, den haetelijksten  
Den onbeseffelijksten, den verwatenlijksten  
Rudaris van alle den Goden ghemeen,  
Swert, vuyl, besmijstert ende onreen,  
Die alder vriendelijcheit is ongewoone.

[VENUS: Yes, for sure:

I have the ugliest, the most hateful,  
the most insensitive, the most contemptible  
jerk of all the Gods together,  
black, dirty, filthy and unclean,

who lacks all the softer emotions.] *For Pleasure and Profit*, ed. and trans. by Strietman and Happé, lines 111–16.

mus and Thisbe plays: it is an example of that altered awareness of human life as not necessarily valuable only *sub specie aeternitatis* but for itself, for the here and now. In that we may well see it as manifesting a 'Renaissance' consciousness.

Apart from the deities, *Mars en Venus* employs a pair of *sinneken*s named *Jolijt van Ooghen* (Eyes Delight) and *Gepeijs van Minnen* (Love's Thoughts), the allegorical embodiments of the frivolous, sexual urges which cause Mars and Venus to commit adultery. In this particular myth there are no other obvious agents causing them to sin. The playwright was thus at liberty to use the *sinneken*s not only in their 'narrative' functions, explaining, foretelling, summing up, but also in their 'active' function of making use of Venus's dissatisfaction with her husband. They know how to ignite love so that desire flames up like a straw fire (line 176) and they cunningly do so in conversations with Venus and whilst singing her praises to Mars. *Sinneken*s do not necessarily have direct contact with their victims. In this case however the direct contact with the characters facilitates the effective embodiment of the emotions of the protagonists. They do their plotting in the 'scenes apart', a conventional practice for *sinneken*s. Their function as commentators is also fully used by the playwright in the off-stage love scenes between Mars and Venus where the *sinneken*s titillate themselves and the audience in commenting in detail on the 'goings on'. Their plotting is successful: they prompt the sinning and they look forward eagerly to the inevitable consequences of the adultery.<sup>23</sup> These are not, of course, inevitable in the same way as in the context of the Church's view of adultery: Mars and Venus, on discovery, lose their honour, they lose face, they become social outcasts. In this respect the play is a serious warning: do not court social disgrace.

<sup>23</sup> *For Pleasure and Profit*, ed. and translated by Strietman and Happé, lines 216–18, the *sinneken*s aim to inflame Venus' and Mars' passion:

JOLIJT: Wij sullent so brouwen,  
 Dat de gheijnsteren van minnen sullen int dack vlieghe,  
 Al sou men bloots hooft de haeren sack drieghen.  
 [DELIGHT: We'll cook up something in such a way  
 That the sparks of love will fly into the roof  
 When the hairy sack has its head bared.]

At the same time they are aware that retribution will follow (lines 849–51):

GHEPEIJS: Nu ga wij, wij hebbens meer ghewracht,  
 Tis noch al vreucht dat hoop hout blijft  
 Totdat men van drucke die ooghen wrijft.  
 [THOUGHTS: Come, we'll go, we've managed it again:  
 It's all joy while the going's good  
 Until the tears of grief appear.]

The *sinneken*s add something that alters that obvious ending: their indignation and disgust is wholly directed towards Vulcan's denunciation of his wife on finding her in bed with Mars. Men who speak evil of their wives are beneath contempt and should be denounced themselves. 'Be on your guard,' they warn the men in their audience, 'do not speak evil of women.' We might suspect irony here: the use of the *sinneken*s to voice that particular sentiment probably undermines it. There are countless farces and non-dramatic texts with situations which show, and mock, similar views of a world 'upside down', a world in which men are fooled, women triumphant, lovers beguiled into sin. Smeecken's comedy only differs from these in the length of the play, in the overt moralizing, in the use of *sinneken*s, in his use of characters in, literally, high places. He could have used knights and ladies, kings and queens but chose to set his play on Mount Olympus, an unusual choice for an early sixteenth-century Rhetoricians playwright. No doubt for most of his audience Mars and Venus were as alien as kings and queens with this differences that Smeecken makes it clear that they are not part of a Christian world and therefore not to be judged by its standards.

A different use of classical material and gods was made by the Antwerp Rhetorician playwright, Cornelis van Ghistele half a century later (1551) in a May play in two parts about Aeneas and Dido.<sup>24</sup> Van Ghistele was a prolific and professional translator of classical texts into Dutch as well as the *factor* of the Antwerp Chamber of Rhetoric *De Goutbloem* (The Marigold). His studies at the University of Leuven and his later work as translator meant that his knowledge of the Ancients was thorough. His choice of the story of Aeneas and Dido was not surprising: he was at the time engaged in a translation of the *Aeneid* into Dutch, the first of its kind.<sup>25</sup>

His choice of subject matter had its limitations in that the fate of the lovers is wholly steered by the destiny of Aeneas as ordained by Jupiter and by the bitter enmity between Juno and Venus. Van Ghistele's other limitations stemmed from the fact that he was commissioned to write two plays for a May celebration and

<sup>24</sup> 'Van Eneas en Dido', ed. and trans. by Iwema, pp. 112–15 and pp. 127–35, where he provides a detailed analytical survey of the two plays. My discussion elsewhere is based on Iwema's work but with a detailed analysis of the representation of Dido: see 'Two Amorous Plays Performed in Antwerp, 1552', *European Medieval Drama*, 4 (2000), 109–26.

<sup>25</sup> See for extensive descriptions of the various editions of Van Ghistele's *Aeneis* and other work the detailed study by M. Vinck-Van Caekenberghe, *Een onderzoek naar het leven, het werk en de literaire opvattingen van Cornelis van Ghistele (1510/11–1573), rederijker en humanist* (Gent: KANTL, 1996), pp. 470–97.

that therefore the love element had to be prominent, more so than the forces of destiny. Writing as a Rhetorician, he had to fashion his material in such a way that a clear moral lesson could be extracted and presented convincingly to his audience. In the original the cast list is grouped into three: those derived from identifiable classical sources; the *sinnekens Fame van Eeren* (Fame of Honour) and *Amoureus Herte* (Amorous Heart); and some articulate secondary characters, a mason, a labourer, a guard. The entire setting and the action seem part of the imagined classical world.

There is, however, another aspect to these two plays connected with Van Ghistele's own time. That is the link, mentioned earlier, between the Trojan Aeneas as the founder of the Imperium Romanum and his latter-day successor, the Emperor Charles V, ruler of the greater part of Europe and of the Low Countries. The link made between the two rulers is their obedience to their god, whether Jupiter or the Christian God, and the promise of an Empire without end (*Imperium sine finis dedi* in the case of Jupiter, 'world without end' in the case of God). In the prologue to the first play the everlasting empire (based on trust in and obedience to Jupiter/God) is declared to be part of the theme of the plays. With that the relationship between the earthly ruler, Charles, and the heavenly ruler, God, comes into play, a relationship which is shown to have its parallels in Old Testament history, with that between Solomon, Joseph, David and the Almighty.

In the epilogue the moral of the plays is summarized with the help of the Virgilian quotation *Improbe amor quid non mortalia pectora cogis* (*Aeneid* IV. 412) which Van Ghistele renders loosely as 'O Venus, hoe onsteectij therde der menschen! Hoe quaedt is om blusschen uwen vlamighen brandt!' (Oh Venus, how you inflame the heart(s) of men! How difficult it is to douse your fiery flames!).<sup>26</sup> There are many kinds of love and most are to be shunned; that is not to say that proper, timely love which is not contrary to God's will does not bring joy. This is then underpinned with extensive quotations from Ecclesiastes 3. 1–8, 'There is a time for loving, a time for hating, a time for war and a time for peace', and

<sup>26</sup> *Virgil. The Aeneid*, ed. and trans. by W. F. Jackson Knight (London: Penguin, 1956), Book IV, line 412, p. 110: 'Ah, merciless Love, is there any length to which you cannot force the human heart to go?', and '*Van Eneas en Dido*', ed. and trans. by Iwema, p. 217, lines 1825–26. Van Ghistele's rendering of 'improbe amor . . .', in his translation of *Aeneid* IV. 412 is 'o liefde wreet is u cluchtinghe / Die den mensche dwingt tot sulken cueren' (Oh, Love, cruel is your whim! which forces men into such folly).

Matthew 25. 13: 'Wake, for thou knowest not the day nor the hour that the Son of Man will come.'

In many ways, then, the classical material is interpreted from a theocentric point of view as well as interwoven with the ostensible moral didactic purpose of the plays. It serves to explain the folly to which love drives men and it illuminates the moral lesson to be deducted from it, namely that only love sanctioned by God is proper love. In this way Van Ghistele makes his moral interpretation also suitable for the May celebration for which the play was commissioned.

This web of thematic threads affects and determines the functions of the *sinneken*. In some ways their usual powers are curtailed: not they but the deities, in particular Jupiter and Venus, are the determining factors in the fate of Aeneas and Dido; the agent through which their passion is ignited is Cupid disguised as Ascanias. Dido's suicide is not in any way brought about by the *sinneken*, nor is her tragic end used by the playwright in any Christian context. The role of the *sinneken* is narrowed down to the usual theatrical aspects: giving actors time to change, entertaining the audience in the intervals of the serious and sometimes solemn narrative scenes. They act as commentators to the audience, they anticipate, titillate, summarize, and they relate parts of the plays not acted on the stage, notably the scene in the cave between Aeneas and Dido. They describe in detail Dido's emotions and mock her cruelly. Nowhere do they interact with her or any of the other characters, divine or human. Apart from some clichés such as 'reading a *pater noster* for this soul', nowhere else do they evoke a Christian point of view, one that in contrast will be strongly emphasized in the epilogue.<sup>27</sup> The *sinneken* do not in any way function as servants of Satan, as perverted and inverted promoters of God's will; they are used as separate dramatic entities. Apart from some moral platitudes about the dangers of loving unwisely voiced by the *sinneken* at the end of the second play, their moral role is in effect taken over by the speakers in the epilogue, in particular *Een man staetelijck ghecleet* (A Man in Respectable Dress) who makes the distinction between proper and improper love, supporting his arguments with biblical quotations.

<sup>27</sup> 'Van Eneas en Dido', ed. and trans. by Iwema, pp. 231–32, where Fame of Honour lays the blame for Dido's misery on Loving Heart: 'Nichte leest veur die siele een pater noster doch, / want deur u hulpe isse coomen int verdriet swaer.' Loving Heart refutes this, blaming his companion, who then declares: 'Neemt hier u speghele, ghij jonghe personen: laet u dus niet hoonen deur Venus trecken!' (Look into your mirror, you young people: do not let Venus's tricks cause you shame!).

These two plays as a whole, notwithstanding their very elaborate and faithful re-creation of the classical story, are firmly set in a contemporary moral, religious, and political frame. The two plays share a prologue and an epilogue which make it clear that God's plan for the world, foretold in the Old Testament and confirmed in the New, was demonstrably at work in the ancient world and equally potent in Van Ghistele's time.

Van Ghistele wrote half a century after Smeecken. His evident learning, his elaborate imaging of his classical material by which he created painfully human protagonists, his portrayal of Dido as tragic make his plays certainly humanist and in many ways 'Renaissance' plays, whilst he retained an outlook *sub specie aeternitatis*. Smeecken's cheerful pagan and divine comedy betrays no indebtedness at all to a Christian world view, merely to a pragmatic contemporary view of suitable alliances, with characters and a narrative which only in superficial ways are 'classical' and 'divine'. Notwithstanding that superficiality, Smeecken the Rhetorician demonstrates a consciousness of the human condition which is no longer subjugated to a Christian world view. Van Ghistele, the humanist scholar, preserved his Rhetorician outlook, one that in its religious and political aspects had already evoked strong criticism from humanists and religious and political dissenters.

Rhetoricians, humanists, and Renaissance writers all subscribed to the idea that mixing the *dulce et utile* is the right and proper thing to do. In the promulgation of their ideas they were making use of Christian and classical material with different emphases. Trying to label the past and its products as belonging to strictly different categories is not very useful: surrendering to the lasting fascination of its rich complexities, the simultaneity of traditions and innovations, is very sweet indeed.



## GUILD PAGEANTS AND URBAN STABILITY IN LILLE

Alan E. Knight

In the late Middle Ages, general processions that involved the entire town were familiar events for the people of Lille. From the late fifteenth through the sixteenth century, the frequency of such processions, both annual and occasional, seems to have increased almost year by year. As elsewhere in the Burgundian Netherlands, these urban rituals were of various types: processions of devotion, penance, petition, or thanksgiving. Among all such ceremonies, however, there was one procession for which Lille was famous; it was the annual procession in honour of the Virgin Mary, which took place on the Sunday after Trinity. Called simply the *Procession de Lille* or the *Procession Notre Dame*, it had been founded by Countess Margaret of Flanders in 1270. It thus antedated by several decades the establishment of the Corpus Christi procession in Lille, and it always overshadowed the latter event, which took place only three days earlier on the Thursday after Trinity. By the fifteenth century the Lille procession had become a spectacular religious and civic ritual that involved all the city's institutions and inhabitants. Alain Lottin describes the organization of the procession as follows:

L'ordre du cortège était fixé selon une longue tradition. Les confréries 'sermentées', archers, arbalétriers, canonniers, escrimeurs ouvraient la marche. Ils étaient suivis par les corps de métier, portant une image de leur saint patron, leurs 'torses' et des chandelles; puis venaient les pèlerins, ceux de saint Jacques par exemple, et les membres des confréries de dévotion. Ensuite s'avançaient le Magistrat 'en corps et en robe', le clergé des couvents et des paroisses, puis celui de la collégiale Saint-Pierre précédant les 'fiertes et reliques' dont la dernière était celle de Notre-Dame.

Au XV<sup>e</sup> et dans les deux premiers tiers du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle la procession de Lille [. . .] avait pris un aspect 'festif' très prononcé. Les corps de métier et les compagnies de jeunesse s'étaient chargés de représenter sur des chariots, des 'histoires', mettant en scène des

épisodes de l'histoire sainte. L'après-midi ces jeux scéniques étaient répétés dans les quartiers et devant la maison de ville et les échevins décernaient des prix aux meilleurs.<sup>1</sup>

[The order of the parade was fixed according to a long-standing tradition. The sworn military orders — archers, crossbowmen, cannoneers, swordsmen — opened the march. They were followed by the trade and craft guilds, carrying images of their patron saints and their torches and candles. Then came the pilgrims, those of Saint James, for example, and the members of the devotional confraternities. Next processed the city officials in their robes, the regular and secular clergy, then the clergy of the collegiate church of Saint Peter, preceding the shrines and reliquaries, the last of which was that of Our Lady.

In the fifteenth century and during the first two thirds of the sixteenth century, the Lille procession [. . .] had acquired a pronounced festive character. The trade and merchant guilds and the youth groups had undertaken to stage on wagons certain *histoires* representing episodes from sacred history. In the afternoon these dramatic scenes were repeated in the neighbourhoods and before the city hall, and the aldermen awarded prizes for the best ones.]

Lille at that time was governed by a body of thirty-nine men, known collectively as *La Loi*. Of that number the twelve aldermen or *echevins* wielded primary authority. Because the latter also exercised judicial functions, the governing body was also known as *Le Magistrat*.<sup>2</sup> While the collegiate church of Saint Peter was responsible for the religious aspects of the Lille procession, the municipal government directed the secular participants and contributed substantial sums of money for the rich decorations of the parade and for the prizes that were awarded each year. It is true, as Lottin states, that both the guilds and the youth groups staged dramatic spectacles on pageant wagons, but there were crucial differences between the two sets of participants. I have described in previous articles how the neighbourhood youth groups mimed mystery plays along the route of march as the procession passed and how, after the procession, they pulled their wagons into the city square and staged the plays 'en bonne et vraie rhétorique'.<sup>3</sup> The trade and craft guilds, however, did not stage mystery plays;

<sup>1</sup> Alain Lottin, *Lille: Citadelle de la Contre-Réforme? (1598–1668)* (Dunkirk: Westhoek-Editions, 1984), p. 279. All translations are mine.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Croquez, *Histoire de Lille*, 2 vols (Lille: Emile Raoust, 1935–39), I (1935), 73–74.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, 'Processional Theatre and the Rituals of Social Unity in Lille', in *Drama and Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Alan Hindley (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 99–109; 'The Roman "Saint Plays" of Lille', *Medieval English Theatre*, 19 (1999), 15–25; 'The Bishop of Fools and his Feasts in Lille', in *Festive Drama*, ed. by Meg Twycross (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), pp. 157–66. See also *Les Mystères de la Procession de Lille* (Geneva: Droz, 2001), I, 49–67.

they mounted tableaux vivants on wagons that moved in the procession itself. The tableaux were usually called *histoires* because they were living pictures that illustrated events from sacred history.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to Lottin's assertion, the guilds did not repeat their scenes elsewhere after the procession. Because their contribution to the dramatic activities of the Lille procession are less well known than that of the youth groups, I will devote this essay to examining the guild pageants and their role in Lille's most important cultural manifestation of the year.

Each year the *Magistrat* issued an ordinance or proclamation announcing the upcoming Corpus Christi and Lille processions. In the surviving registers of these ordinances, the earliest of which dates from 1382, the first reference to the guilds taking part in the Lille procession is from the year 1396. The ordinance states simply that all 'gens de métier' (guild members) should accompany the torch or flambeau of their own guild and should march peacefully in the places assigned to them.<sup>5</sup> The first reference to dramatic representations by the guilds is found in the proclamation of 1402:

Que toute maniere de gens de mestier de ceste ville qui [. . .] ont intencion de faire aucuns jeux ou representacions de vies de sains ou autrement voient paisiblement auxdis Sacrement et Procession en faisant compaignie a leurs dites torses ou candeilles, jeux ou representacions, li uns après l'autre tout devant le colege de l'eglise de saint Pierre en ledite ville selonc ce qu'il seront ordenés.<sup>6</sup>

[Let all the guild members of this city who [. . .] intend to mount any plays or representations of saints' lives or anything else go peacefully in the Corpus Christi and Lille processions, accompanying their torches or flambeaux, plays or representations, one after the other immediately in front of the college [of canons] from Saint Peter's church in the said city, as they are ordered.]

The ordinance makes it clear that the *jeux* moved in the procession, presumably on wagons, each accompanying the sponsoring guild. It does not tell us, however, what kind of representation was involved. In later documents the word *jeux* is normally applied to the plays staged by the neighbourhood youth groups after the procession, while the word *histoires* is used to designate the tableaux vivants staged by the guilds in the procession itself. Since it seems unlikely that the guilds would present complete plays in dialogue while moving through the

<sup>4</sup> For clarity I have retained the term *histoire*, which in this context refers to a dramatized historical scene or tableau vivant. One might say that a procession decorated with *histoires* is analogous to a manuscript decorated with historiated initials and other illustrations.

<sup>5</sup> *Registre aux ordonnances du Magistrat*, Archives Municipales de Lille [AML], 374, fol. 10<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> *Registre aux ordonnances*, AML, 374, fol. 86<sup>v</sup>.

streets of Lille, we must suppose that the dramatic representations of 1402 were non-speaking tableaux or mimed scenes from the lives of the saints or other events in sacred history. The place of the guilds and their pageant wagons in the parade was immediately preceding the body of clergy from the collegiate church. They in turn would precede the *fiertre* or reliquary of the Virgin Mary, which was the *raison d'être* of the procession and the principal focus of devotion, containing as it did some of the hair and 'milk' of the Virgin.<sup>7</sup> At this early date, the composition of the Lille procession was less elaborate than that described by Lottin, which reflects the practice of a later period.

The ordinance was reissued in 1417 with a significant difference in the order of march. As in 1402, the guilds are directed to process 'tout devant le college de l'église Saint-Pierre' in the order assigned to them, but the wagons are no longer to accompany the guilds to which they belong:

Et semblablement se aucuns ont intention de faire aucuns jeux ou representations de vies de sains ou autrement, [qu'ilz] voient paisiblement [. . .] devant ycelle procession ou après ledit college selonc ce qu'ilz serront ordonnés.<sup>8</sup>

[Similarly, if any [guild members] intend to mount any plays or representations of saints' lives or anything else, [let them] go peacefully [. . .] before this procession or after the said college, as they are ordered.]

Thus the procession of 1417 opened with a series of tableaux vivants on wagons and closed with another series. Since it was the aldermen who determined the place of each guild in the procession, one wonders what they had in mind by grouping the pageant wagons in this fashion. Was it simply a practical matter of separating horse-drawn wagons from walking participants or was there perhaps an attempt to set a theme for the procession? If the latter, we have no hint of the subjects of the tableaux beyond the reference to 'vies de sains'. Did they portray events from the lives of the patron saints of the guilds, as was the case later in nearby Oudenaarde,<sup>9</sup> or perhaps from the life of Mary in whose honour the procession was founded? Did the other subjects include scenes from the Bible, miracles, or perhaps moral allegories? We will never know the answers to such

<sup>7</sup> The milk was a chalky substance from a grotto near Bethlehem, where the Virgin is said to have nursed her child. See E. Hautcoeur, *Histoire de l'église collégiale et du chapitre de Saint-Pierre de Lille*, 3 vols (Lille: L. Quarré, 1896–99), 1 (1896), 366.

<sup>8</sup> *Registre aux ordonnances*, AML, 375, fol. 57<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> B. A. M. Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren: Toneelkunst en processiecultuur in Oudenaarde tussen Middeleeuwen en Moderne Tijd* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), p. 278.

questions because the surviving municipal documents, though they are numerous for this period, fall silent on the matter of guild pageants for the next sixty-five years.

There is, however, no lack of documentation relating to the guilds' usual participation in the procession during those years.<sup>10</sup> The mounting of *tableaux vivants* seems to have been a voluntary exercise, but it was the duty of every guild to parade each year as a corporate body in the Corpus Christi and Lille processions. One of the articles in the charter of the butchers' guild, for example, reads:

Item, seront lesdis bouchers tenus chascun an de decorer les Sacrement et Procession de Lille [. . .] en faisant parures, torches et chandailles.<sup>11</sup>

[Likewise, the said butchers will be required to embellish the Corpus Christi and Lille processions each year [. . .] with their finery, torches, and flambeaux.]

Moreover, it was the duty of every member of a guild to march in these two processions in the company of his confreres. Anyone who did not participate was subject to a fine. In addition, the ordinances of the *Magistrat* make it clear that the twelve *echevins* were assiduous and forceful in exercising their right to determine the place of the guilds in the parade. Two ordinances from the fifteenth century provide a complete list of the guilds ranked according to the order in which they marched in the two processions. The first list, dating from 1423, contains the names of thirty-three guilds; the second, dating from 1485, contains the names of fifty-seven guilds. Those appearing in the earlier list retain the same order in relation to each other in the later list, and the twenty-four new guilds are inserted mainly in the first half of the sequence.<sup>12</sup> The end position was of course the most prestigious because it was closer to the reliquary of the Virgin. Sometimes the *Magistrat* had to arbitrate disputes between guilds in regard to their assigned position. In 1420, for example, the linen weavers and the mercers quarrelled about their places relative to one another. The weavers wanted to follow the mercers 'pour aler plus pres de le fiertre et a l'honneur aux jours du Sacrement et Procession de Lille' (in order to march closer to the reliquary and place of honour on the days of the Corpus Christi and Lille processions). The

<sup>10</sup> See the chapters on Lille in Georges Espinas, *Les origines du droit d'association dans les villes de l'Artois et de la Frandre française jusqu'au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2 vols (Lille: Emile Raoust, 1941–42), I (1941), 715–904, II (1942), 356–496.

<sup>11</sup> Espinas, *Les origines*, II, 402.

<sup>12</sup> Espinas, *Les origines*, II, 380, 460–61.

aldermen ruled in the weavers' favour and ordered the mercers to precede them.<sup>13</sup> It seems to have been a temporary victory, however, since in both the lists mentioned above, the linen weavers precede the mercers.

The next reference to *histoires* being mounted by the guilds is found, not among the ordinances, but in the municipal account book for the fiscal year 1482–83. During the intervening years the plays staged by the neighbourhood youth groups, who are called *les rues et les places* in the documents, had grown in number and importance. In the 1430s a contest had been established in which the best mystery plays and farces were awarded prizes. In most years the contest was conducted by a personage called the Bishop of Fools, who was elected by the canons of the collegiate church each year during Twelfth Night festivities and who organized festive entertainments and contests in the city at other times of the year. The cost of the prizes was borne by the municipal treasury, and therefore a reference to their being awarded to the youth groups for the best plays (*jeux de personnaiges*) appears in the account books almost every year. In 1483, however, the Bishop awarded prizes not only to the youth groups for their plays, but also, for the first time, to the guilds for their tableaux:

A maistre Toussains de Lattre, chanoine de l'eglise Saint Pierre et Evesque des Folz pour ceste annee presente, que donné lui a esté en courtoisie au susport des frais par lui soustenuz en donnant certains pris et joyaulx d'argent a ceulx des places et mestiers de ceste dicte ville, qui ont fait histoires et jeux moralisiéz pour la decoracion d'icelle procession [. . .] dix livres.<sup>14</sup>

[To master Toussains de Lattre, canon of Saint Peter's church and Bishop of Fools for the current year, was given as a courtesy to help defray the expenses incurred by him in giving certain prizes and gifts of silver to those of the neighbourhoods and guilds of this city who presented *histoires* and edifying plays for the embellishment of the procession [. . .] ten livres.]

There is no way to know whether the guilds had been staging tableaux vivants in the procession between the invitation of the aldermen in 1417 and the awarding of prizes in 1483. It is, however, possible that such was the case. Since the pageant scenes were voluntary, there was no need for the *echevins* to issue ordinances about them, and since the guilds did not participate in a contest, there were no expenses to record in the account books. Thus the absence of docu-

<sup>13</sup> Espinas, *Les origines*, II, 379.

<sup>14</sup> *Comptes de la ville*, AML, 16222, fol. 91<sup>v</sup>. The term *jeux moralisiéz* includes saints' lives and biblical dramas, as well as morality plays. The term *jeux de folie*, which appears later, designates farces.

mentation may not indicate a lack of participation. Whatever happened in those earlier years, it appears that in 1483 the municipal government decided to offer prizes to the guilds to encourage them to add to the visual and dramatic spectacle of the procession, a spectacle that the aldermen probably hoped would bring even more pilgrims and visitors to the city for the already famous Lille procession. There may also have been a sense of competition with nearby Oudenaarde, whose Corpus Christi procession was growing in fame as its number of dramatic representations increased. Already by 1481 there were forty-one tableaux vivants in the Oudenaarde procession.<sup>15</sup>

The same phrase recording prizes given to ‘ceulx des places et mestiers qui ont fait histoires et jeux moralisiéz’ recurs in the account books through 1487. There is no reference to prizes in 1488, and in 1490 only the ‘places’ are mentioned as having received prizes, though it is likely that the scribe omitted ‘et mestiers’ by accident. For the next three years the prizes are given to those who mounted ‘histoires et jeux moralisiéz’, and from 1494 to 1499 they are awarded to those who staged ‘jeux moralisiéz’. From 1501 to 1526 the prizes go to those who played ‘jeux moralisiéz et de folie’. Thus the term *histoires*, which was normally used to designate the tableaux vivants, disappears from the records in 1494. It would seem, then, that the guilds ceased to participate in the contest at that time, but it is not clear whether they no longer contributed pageant wagons to the procession on a voluntary basis. It is also possible, of course, that their participation continued and that the accountants who kept the books, unconcerned with the kinds of distinctions we would like to make, lumped all the dramatic elements together in one category.

The guilds were not the only groups to mount tableaux vivants on wagons in the procession. In 1434 the aldermen granted a subsidy to a company from the parish of Saint Saviour, which was a poor, working-class district of the city. The group, called Les Compagnons de Saint Sauveur, received the money because of the ‘frais et despens par eulx soustenus en certaines hystoires par eulx faictez en la procession’<sup>16</sup> (costs and expenses incurred by them for certain *histoires* that they mounted in the procession). No other grant to this group is recorded until 1460, when there begins an annual subsidy for ‘pluseurs histoires remoustrees pour la decoration de la procession’ (several *histoires* staged for the embellishment of the procession). It is not until the account-book entry for 1466, however, that

<sup>15</sup> Ramakers, *Spelen en figuren*, pp. 435–36.

<sup>16</sup> *Comptes de la ville*, AML, 16176, fol. 48<sup>v</sup>.

we learn that the subject of their *histoires* was the 'Passion nostre seigneur Jhesucrist'. The entry for 1470 gives a more detailed picture of the activities of this group:

Aux compaignons de Saint Sauveur, lesquelz firent pluseurs histoires sur le fait de la Passion nostre seigneur Jhesucrist audevant de ladicte fiertre Nostre Dame, mouvant depuis ladicte eglise Saint Pierre jusques a le porte Saint Sauveur, ainssy qu'ilz ont acoustumé faire chascun an pour la decorasion de ladicte procession [. . .] huit livres.<sup>17</sup>

[To the companions of Saint Saviour, who presented several *histoires* on the subject of the Passion of our lord Jesus Christ before the reliquary of Our Lady, moving from Saint Peter's church to Saint Saviour gate, as they are accustomed to do each year for the embellishment of the procession [. . .] eight *livres*.]

Thus in the place of greatest honour, immediately before the reliquary of the Virgin Mary, a company from the poorest section of the city staged scenes from the Passion on wagons moving in the procession. In 1479 the group changed its name to La Gauguerie and added scenes of the Nativity and Resurrection. In 1481 they added tableaux of the Annunciation and the Gifts of the Magi 'avec aucunes aultres histoires nouvelles par eulx adjoustees [. . .] et aussi des martires d'aucuns glorieux sains'<sup>18</sup> (along with several new *histoires* added by them [. . .] as well as the martyrdoms of several glorious saints). In 1483 there is a reference to the great number of horses needed to pull all the company's wagons. That year too, as we have seen, marked the beginning of the guilds' participation in a contest to win prizes for the best tableaux vivants. The tableaux of the Passion, however, seem not to have been part of any competition, probably because they were all done by one group and because the city paid for them each year.

By the end of the fifteenth century, the procession had grown to the point that it now comprised all the religious, political, and military institutions of the city with all their members; fifty-seven guilds, many with tableaux on wagons; the numerous pageants of La Gauguerie, exhibiting scenes from the life and Passion of Christ, along with other subjects; and the wagons of the neighbourhood youth groups stationed along the route of march, on which the players mimed their plays as the procession passed. It is perhaps impossible to visualize completely this enormous parade winding through the streets and squares of the city, but one can at least grasp some measure of the scale and grandeur of the late medieval Lille procession.

<sup>17</sup> *Comptes de la ville*, AML, 16209, fol. 109<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> *Comptes de la ville*, AML, 16221, fol. 102<sup>v</sup>.



The sixteenth century brought significant social and cultural changes, and sometimes upheavals, to the life of the city. The year 1527 saw the first of a series of major alterations in the organization of the procession. It had been the custom, as we have noted, for the Bishop of Fools and his companions to conduct the ceremonies for awarding prizes for the best plays. His companions were a group analogous to the neighbourhood youth groups, drawn either from the parish of Saint Peter's or possibly from the Latin school attached to the church. The first reference to their presenting plays dates from 1432, when they participated in a dramatic contest in Béthune.<sup>19</sup> They are first called *vicaires* in 1475, when the Bishop of Fools and his 'compaignons vicaires de l'église saint Pierre' awarded prizes for the best plays of the Lille procession.<sup>20</sup> The Vicars are mentioned several more times in the fifteenth-century accounts, and in the first quarter of the sixteenth century they are mentioned every year as conducting the award ceremonies. In 1527, however, the *echevins* took over all the duties of the Bishop of Fools and his Vicars and paid one of their own officers to

conduire et mettre en ordre lesdis mestiers et torses, obstant que les Vicaires de Saint Pierre, qui estoient accoustuméz ce faire, ne se y estoient trouvéz, a raison que messeigneurs de la Loy donnoient les pris des jeux de ladicte procession.<sup>21</sup>

[direct and put the guilds and their torches in order, in view of the fact that the Vicars of Saint Peter's, who usually did this, were not present because the gentlemen of the city government were awarding the prizes for the plays performed at the procession.]

We can only speculate as to the reason for the takeover, but it may not be a coincidence that the influence of Lutheranism had begun to be felt in the previous year. At that time the aldermen, who saw the new movement as a threat to the stability of their city, had entered into a conflict with the Bishop of Tournai and the local governor as to who should be responsible for prosecuting and judging the 'heretics'. Ultimately Emperor Charles V ruled in the aldermen's favour.<sup>22</sup> In such an atmosphere, it seems likely that they would want to consolidate their authority in as many areas as possible, including the procession, less perhaps for

<sup>19</sup> *Comptes de la ville*, AML, 16174, fol. 74<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> *Comptes de la ville*, AML, 16214, fol. 191<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> *Comptes de la ville*, AML, 16262, fol. 165<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Alain Lottin, 'Lille sous Charles Quint: sociabilité et vie religieuse', in *Histoire de Lille de Charles Quint à la conquête française*, ed. by Louis Trenard (Toulouse: Privat, 1981), pp. 69–96 (p. 91).

the sake of power itself than to maintain order in the city so that commerce could thrive. Most of them were, after all, wealthy businessmen.

There is no mention of guild pageants in the 1527 account, but six years later, for the first time since 1493, prizes are again awarded to the guilds for the most beautiful *histoires*. It is significant, however, that an ordinance of the same year (1533) gives assembly instructions for ‘toutes les histoires accoustumees’ (all the usual *histoires*), as if they had been staged all along. Moreover, the same ordinance instructs the guild members who mount the tableaux to conduct themselves ‘honnestement sans faire derision de prendre gens, ainsy que le passé s’est fait’<sup>23</sup> (properly without mocking people, as has happened in the past). It would seem, then, that some of the guilds had all along been presenting tableaux in the procession without the incentive of winning prizes. In addition to the prizes awarded in 1533 to the two guilds having the best tableaux, a subsidy was given to each of the twenty-six other guilds that presented tableaux on wagons. Though we do not know how many guild pageants were previously mounted in the absence of a contest, the aldermen were apparently willing to pay the significant cost (in this case, fifty-seven *livres*) of reinstituting the competition and subsidizing the guilds in order to encourage them to present biblical scenes in the procession. This, too, may have been a response to the perceived threat of heresy in the city, for 1533 was the year of the first executions for that ‘crime’ in Lille. The death penalty was carried out in the same public square through which the procession passed and in which the youth groups staged their plays afterward. In the spring of that year, two Lutherans were burned alive and four others were beheaded, the last of these on the very eve of the procession, which took place on 15 June.<sup>24</sup> If the aldermen’s death sentence against the Lutherans had been an austere warning to the people of Lille about the dangers of heresy, their efforts to increase the number of biblical tableaux and plays that were seen on procession day may have been meant as a positive reinforcement of the truths of sacred history to which the people should adhere.

In 1534 the aldermen ordered another major change in the organization of the procession. We have seen that for many years the company from the parish of Saint Saviour had exclusive rights to stage scenes from the Passion. In fact, the ordinance of 1533 states specifically that:

<sup>23</sup> *Registre aux ordonnances*, AML, 380, fol. 104<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Lottin, ‘Lille sous Charles Quint’, p. 92. According to Lottin, the term Lutheran was applied to anyone of heterodox beliefs, without regard to the tenets of Luther.

tous mestiers polront faire quelque histore sievant les chandeilles telles que bon leur samblera, en cas que ce ne soient des histores de la Passion nostre Seigneur, que la ville fait faire.<sup>25</sup>

[all guilds may present any *histoire* they wish following their flambeaux, provided it is not one of the *histoires* of the Passion of Our Lord, which the city organizes.]

The following year, however, the aldermen abandoned that long-standing tradition and designated half of the forty-six guilds to stage 'histoires de la Passion'. The twenty-three other guilds were invited to mount scenes of their choice 'sur esclans' (on wagons).<sup>26</sup> Though the latter had the option of declining to stage a tableau vivant, only five did so, which means that there were forty-one guild pageant wagons in the procession of 1534, a significant increase over the previous year. The Passion scenes began, as in Gréban's *Passion*, with the Creation of Adam and Eve and ended with the Descent into Hell. (For a complete list of the guilds' Passion tableaux in 1534, see Appendix A.) We do not know what scenes the other guilds staged, except for the two that won prizes. The cappers won first prize for the tableau of Judith and Holophernes, and the joiners won second prize for the tableau of Joachim and Anna.<sup>27</sup> We may nevertheless infer that all or most of the tableaux represented biblical scenes, which suggests again that the aldermen were intent on providing examples of sacred history that would counteract the heterodox interpretations of the Bible circulating among the populace.

The most radical change in the organization of the guild pageants took place in 1535, when the aldermen and city council ordered that

les histoires quy se feront par les mestiers d'icelle ville seront figurees du Viez Testament a l'encontre du Nouveau, selon qu'il sera delivré ausdits mestiers par le procureur de ceste ville.<sup>28</sup>

[the *histoires* that will be staged by the guilds of this city shall be figures of the Old Testament compared with the New, as they are assigned to the said guilds by the city attorney.]

Thus the guild pageants were organized in pairs of scenes that were linked typologically. The first tableau of a pair would present an Old Testament event that prefigured the New Testament scene on the wagon immediately following. The masons' pageant, for example, which depicted the manna from heaven, was

<sup>25</sup> *Registre aux ordonnances*, AML, 380, fol. 104<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> *Affaires générales*, AML, Carton 654, Pièce 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Comptes de la ville*, AML, 16268, fol. 137<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> *Registre aux ordonnances*, AML, 380, fol. 132<sup>v</sup>.

followed by the fullers' wagon, on which was staged the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (no. 9). There was one group of three tableaux (no. 18) in which the Crucifixion pageant was preceded by two Old Testament types: Moses raising the brazen serpent and Abraham sacrificing Isaac. The last three pageants — Descent into Hell, Resurrection, and Last Judgement — processed as a group without Old Testament antecedents. Towards the middle of the procession, the carriers guild presented a giant, probably one of the folkloric figures, such as Lydéric, the legendary founder of Lille, that were often represented at festivals in Flanders. In two cases, two guilds joined to make one tableau. In all, forty-three guilds participated in exhibiting forty-one tableaux vivants in the procession of 1535. Thirteen of the tableaux represented events that were also staged in the 1534 Passion sequence, but because the guilds had to process in a long-established fixed order, most were not able to repeat the scenes they had done the year before. There were only two exceptions, probably brought about by chance: the furriers kept their tableau of Pilate's judgement, and the mercers kept their Crucifixion scene. (For a complete list of the guilds' Old and New Testament tableaux, see Appendix B.)

The biblical types and antitypes were arranged so as to make a chronological presentation of selected events in the life of Jesus from the Annunciation to the Last Judgment, with about half of them being devoted to the Passion. It is not known who chose the scenes to be staged by the guilds, though presumably it was someone with access to a library, since most of the typological pairs had been devised by the Church Fathers and early theologians and were pictorially illustrated in manuscripts and blockbooks that circulated widely in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Of the eighteen paired sequences in the procession, nine are found in the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* (nos 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16); six are found in the *Biblia Pauperum* (nos 4, 5, 10, 11, 16, 18); and three are found in the *Bible Moralisée* (nos 6, 16, 18).<sup>29</sup> According to the Wilsons, each chapter of the *Speculum* 'can be thought of as an inspiration for a sermon by preaching Brothers'.<sup>30</sup> From that point of view, each typological pair of tableaux in the

<sup>29</sup> For examples of these works, see Adrian Wilson and Joyce Lancaster Wilson, *A Medieval Mirror: Speculum humane salvationis, 1324–1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Avril Henry, *Biblia Pauperum: A Facsimile and Edition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Reiner Haussherr, *Bible moralisée*, facsimile edition of Codex Vindobonensis 2554, 2 vols (Graz: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1973). I am indebted to Bridget Ann Henisch for suggesting these typological sources.

<sup>30</sup> Wilson and Wilson, *Medieval Mirror*, p. 28.

procession could be seen as a sermon in pictures, exhorting the people of Lille to adhere to the traditional interpretation of the Bible.

Apparently both the aldermen and the guilds were satisfied with this typological pattern of presenting the tableaux, for it was never changed after 1535. Even in 1565, the last year in which plays and tableaux were presented at the procession, the same pattern was maintained. Moreover, because of the fixed order in which they marched, the guilds always presented the same scenes that they had staged in 1535. The titles of the winning tableaux are given in the account books for a number of the years in that period. Each tableau so identified was staged by the same guild that presented it in 1535. Prizes, consisting of gold coins (*carolus d'or*), were awarded to the two best *histoires* from the Old Testament and the two best from the New Testament. The account books list the winning guilds in fifteen of the years between 1535 and 1565. In those years, sixteen guild pageants won at least one prize, while seven guilds were awarded five or more prizes in different years. The cappers, with their tableau of the child Samuel (no. 5), won most often, taking nine prizes in all.

Over the years the *echevins* of Lille had shown themselves to be specially concerned with the order and stability of the city. The many ordinances they issued prohibiting certain activities were all manifestations of this concern. Even their power struggles with the collegiate church of Saint Peter, the Bishop of Tournai, and the governor of the province were efforts to retain control over the town and its people and thus to provide a stable environment for commerce. Although the individuals elected to the office of alderman changed frequently, the *echevinage* as an institution maintained a remarkable consistency in its goals and values. Therefore, when this group perceived the heterodox religious movements of the 1530s as a serious threat to public order, they urgently searched for ways to neutralize the danger. Obviously they could, and did, arrest and execute some of the heretics in order to make people fear to associate themselves with the new movements, but they were looking for a more positive response to the problem as well. It seems most likely in this context that one of the aldermen proposed the idea of enlisting the guilds and their tableaux in the fight against heresy. Thus, just as a century earlier another group of aldermen, seeking to reduce the violent clashes between neighbourhood youth groups, had involved the groups in an orderly dramatic competition at the procession,<sup>31</sup> so now the current

<sup>31</sup> See Alan E. Knight, 'Processional Theater as an Instrument of Municipal Authority in Lille', in *Formes Teatral de la Tradició Medieval: Actes del VII Colloqui de la Societat Interna-*

aldermen set up another competition for the guilds and their tableaux vivants in order to convey the traditional Catholic view of the biblical message.

A corollary of the heterodox religious movements was the growing availability of vernacular Bibles, which encouraged people to make their own interpretations of the sacred text. Once the aldermen had devised the figural manner of presenting Old and New Testament scenes in the procession, they seem to have believed it to be an effective means of combating what they deemed to be such nefarious influences. In the end, despite some years of turmoil, they succeeded in keeping Lille a Catholic city. Robert Duplessis sums up their achievement in the following way: 'What Lille's political leadership must be credited with is the ability to recognize that it could reproduce both stability and its own hegemony through discriminating intervention, particularly in social and economic affairs, that balanced economic considerations with broadly based cultural traditions and ideological commitments.'<sup>32</sup> Although the *echevins*, in their endeavour to maintain the peace and stability of the city, did not hesitate to burn heretics in the public square, they balanced their repressive measures with the teaching of sacred history by engaging the guilds to present spectacular biblical tableaux each year in the Lille procession.

*tionale pour l'Etude du Théâtre Médiéval, Girona, Juliol de 1992*, ed. by Francesc Massip (Barcelona: Institut del Teatre, 1996), pp. 99–103.

<sup>32</sup> Robert S. Duplessis, *Lille and the Dutch Revolt: Urban Stability in an Era of Revolution, 1500–1582* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 320.

## Appendix A

### *Guild Pageants of 1534*

The following list is taken from a proclamation concerning the organization of the Lille procession in 1534. It was issued by the aldermen and the city council on 21 April. The procession took place on 7 June. (*Affaires Générales*, AML, Carton 654, Pièce 3)

Et quant aux aultres mestiers, ilz seront tenus de faire, s'ilz veullent avoir pris, histoires de la Passion, assçavoir:

|                       |                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bourgeteurs           | La creation de Eve et Adam.                                                                          |
| Saieteurs             | Le deboutement d'iceulx hors du paradis terrestre.                                                   |
| Tistrans de draps     | L'Anonciation de la Vierge Marie.                                                                    |
| Vieswariers           | La Nativité de nostre Seigneur.                                                                      |
| Cordewaniers          | La Circonchision.                                                                                    |
| Tondeurs              | L'ofertoire des Trois Rois.                                                                          |
| Seliers               | L'occision des Innocens.                                                                             |
| Armoieurs             | La conversion de la Magdalaine.                                                                      |
| Tonneliers            | Comment Jhesus prescha les docteurs au Temple.                                                       |
| Febvres               | Comment nostre Seigneur fit la Cene.                                                                 |
| Taincturiers          | Comment nostre Seigneur fit sa priere au jardin d'Olivet et sua sang et eauwe.                       |
| Detaillieurs de draps | Comment nostre Seigneur fut prins au jardin d'Olivet.                                                |
| Brasseurs             | Comment nostre Seigneur fut mené a Herode.                                                           |
| Taneurs               | Comment nostre Seigneur fut ramené a Pilate.                                                         |
| Poissonniers de mer   | Comment nostre Seigneur fut lyé a l'estacque et batu de verges.                                      |
| Bouchiers             | Comment nostre Seigneur fut couronné d'epines.                                                       |
| Orfevres              | Comment nostre Seigneur, après avoir esté flagellé, fut monstré [par Pilate] en disant, 'Ecce homo'. |
| Peletiers             | Comment nostre Seigneur fut jugié par Pilate.                                                        |
| Tistrains de toille   | Comment nostre Seigneur porta sa croix au mont de Calvaire.                                          |
| Merchiers             | Comment nostre Seigneur fut mis en l'arbre de la croix entre deux larrons.                           |
| Chiriers              | Comment nostre Seigneur fut despendu de la croix.                                                    |
| Boullenghiers         | Comment nostre Seigneur fut mis au monument.                                                         |
| Taverniers            | Comment nostre Seigneur descendit au Limbe.                                                          |

[And as for the other guilds, they will be required to present, if they wish to have prizes, tableaux of the Passion, as follows:

|                                 |                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Velveteen Weavers <sup>33</sup> | The creation of Eve and Adam.                                                       |
| Say Weavers                     | The expulsion of these two from the Garden of Eden.                                 |
| Wool Weavers                    | The Annunciation to the Virgin Mary.                                                |
| Rag Merchants                   | The Nativity of Our Lord.                                                           |
| Shoemakers                      | The Circumcision.                                                                   |
| Shearers                        | The offering of the Three Kings.                                                    |
| Saddlers                        | The slaughter of the Innocents.                                                     |
| Armourers                       | The conversion of Mary Magdalene.                                                   |
| Coopers                         | How Jesus preached to the doctors in the Temple.                                    |
| Blacksmiths                     | How Our Lord had the Last Supper.                                                   |
| Dyers                           | How Our Lord prayed in the garden on the Mount of Olives, sweating blood and water. |
| Retailers of wool cloth         | How Our Lord was arrested in the garden on the Mount of Olives.                     |
| Brewers                         | How Our Lord was led before Herod.                                                  |
| Tanners                         | How Our Lord was taken before Pilate.                                               |
| Sea Fish Merchants              | How Our Lord was tied to the pillar and scourged.                                   |
| Butchers                        | How Our Lord was crowned with thorns.                                               |
| Goldsmiths                      | How Our Lord, after having been flogged, was shown [by Pilate] saying, 'Ecce homo'. |
| Furriers                        | How Our Lord was judged by Pilate.                                                  |
| Linen Weavers                   | How Our Lord carried his cross to Calvary.                                          |
| Mercers                         | How Our Lord was put on the cross between two thieves.                              |
| Wax Chandlers                   | How Our Lord was taken down from the cross.                                         |
| Bakers                          | How Our Lord was placed in the tomb.                                                |
| Vintners                        | How Our Lord descended into Hell.]                                                  |

<sup>33</sup> Velveteen and say were textile products of the new light woollen industry in Lille, which prospered because it could produce fabrics that were cheaper than the traditional woollen textiles made by the wool weavers. Velveteen was made with wool and linen, and say was made with combed wool. See Duplessis, *Lille and the Dutch Revolt*, pp. 86–92.



## Appendix B

### *Guild Pageants of the Old and New Testaments*

The following is a list of the guilds and their tableaux vivants in the Lille procession of 1535 and 1536. The numbers of the *figures* are not in the manuscript, but have been added for ease of reference. (*Affaires Générales*, AML, Carton 654, Pièce 3)

#### Pour la procession de Lille

##### 1. Figure

- |                     |                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Porteurs<br>au sacq | Conment Abraham envoye son serviteur Elieser pour avoir femme a Isaacq et comment ce serviteur se adresche a Rebecque qui luy donne a boire, <i>signiffiant</i> : |
| Placqueurs          | Conment Dieu envoie l'angle Gabriel saluer la Vierge Marie et anonchier le mistere de l'Incarnation.                                                              |

##### 2. Figure

- |          |                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chartons | Conment Nature Humaine, liee a l'arbre de science de bien et de mal, crie misericorde a Sapience Divine quy arouze ung vergier dont Jhesus est product, <i>signiffiant</i> : |
| Cordiers | Conment Jhesus devoit naitre de vierge sans violation de virginité.                                                                                                          |

##### 3. Figure

- |                                |                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chavetiers                     | Conment l'angle de Dieu volloit occir Moÿse pourtant que son filz n'estoit circoncis, et sa femme circoncit son filz, <i>signiffiant</i> : |
| Fustailleurs et<br>Bansseliers | Conment Jesus ministre de circoncision et des circoncis devoit observer la loy de circoncision et petitz enffans estre circoncis.          |

##### 4. Figure

- |                        |                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fruictiers             | Conment Salomon fut adoré de la royne de Saba, qui luy fist des grans presens, et de plusieurs autres rois, <i>signifiant</i> : |
| Pigneurs<br>de saiette | Conment Jhesus devoit estre comme Dieu et homme adoré de la royne Vierge Marie et des roys.                                     |

##### 5. Figure

- |             |                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bonnetiers  | Conment Samuel petit enffant fut mené et présenté au Temple [a] Hely le grant prestre, <i>signiffiant</i> :                         |
| Estainniers | Conment Jhesus devoit estre présenté au Temple par la Vierge Marie a saint Simeon et rachecté de deux pigeons ou deux tourtreulles. |

## 6. Figure

- Crachiers    Conment Pharaon fist noier les petitz enffans des Ebrieux entre  
lesquelz est sauvé par sa mere Moïse en la ficelle collee, *signifiant*:  
Escriniers    Conment Herode par convoitise de rengnier fist ochir les innocens,  
mais Jhesus fut preservé par sa mere et Joseph qui le porterent en  
Egipte.

## 7. Figure

- Painctres et    Conment Salomon, jonne roy assis en son trosne, monstra sa  
Voiriers        sapience et discretion devant son peuple a la sentence donnee  
des deux paillardes de l'enfant vif, *signifiant*:  
Barbieurs    Conment Jhesus a l'eage de douze ans devoit monstrar sa sapience  
aux docteurs estans au millieu d'eulx.

## 8. Figure

- Parmentiers    Conment Elizee fait laver Naman Siras ladre au fleuve de Jourdain  
et revient sa char blanche comme ung petit enffant, *signifiant*:  
Corroieurs    Le gayant  
Carpentiers    Conment saint Jehan Baptiste devoit baptiser Jhesus Christ en  
Jourdain pour monstrar l'efficasse du sacrement de baptesme  
qui purge tous pechéz.

## 9. Figure

- Machons    Conment la manne du chiel plut sur les enffans d'Israel, *signifiant*:  
Foulons    Conment Jhesus miraculeusement de peu de pain et de poisson  
devoit nourrir grant peuple.

## 10. Figure

- Bourgeteurs    Conment Melchichedecq fait oblation de pain et vin a Abraham  
retournant de la bataille, *signifiant*:  
Saiecteurs    Conment Jesus le vray evesque devoit donner a ses apostres au jour  
de la Cene son corps et sang soubz espece de pain et vin.

## 11. Figure

- Tristrans    Conment Joab traicteusement en baisant Amasa l'ochist, *signifiant*:  
de draps  
Viezwariers    Conment Judas au jardin d'Olivet vint et par ung baisier devoit  
trahir nostre Seigneur.

## 12. Figure

- Cordoanniers    Conment Dalida loya Sanson et le livra aux Phelistiens,  
*signifiant*:  
Tondeurs    Conment Jhesus par les Juifz devoit estre lié et mené a Anne, et  
Malcus luy donna ung soufflet

## 13. Figure

- Thonneliers    Comment Michee le prophete pour dire verité au roy Achab fut souffleté et persecuté, *signiffiant*:  
 Febvres        Comment Jhesus devoit estre detrachié en la maison de Cayphe, presens Scribes et Pharisees, et estre souffleté.

## 14. Figure

- Caudreliers    Comment une concubine du roy Darrius mectoît et ostoit la couronne dudit roy sur sa teste et le buscoit hardiment, *signiffiant*:  
 Taincturiers    Comment Jhesus devoit estre batu de verges et couronné d'espines et mocqué en luy baillant ung roseau en la maison de Pilatte.

## 15. Figure

- Detaillieurs    Comment Job fut assis sur le fumier tout nud deplaié et navré de draps        depuis la plante du piet jusques au sommet de la teste, *signiffiant*:  
 Brasseurs        Comment Jhesus, pour inciter les Juifz a compassion, devoit estre batu, flagellé et monstre de Pilatte aux Juifz, disant: 'Ecce homo'.

## 16. Figure

- Taneurs        Comment Abraham fait porter a son filz Ysacq le bois avec lequel il debvoit estre sacrifié et luy portoit le feu et la glaive, *signiffiant*:  
 Peletiers        Comment Jhesus devoit estre jugié par Pilatte a porter sa croix ou il devoit estre crucifié. *Nota que les peletiers dient qu'il est plus expedient de mectre comment Jhesus porta sa croix.*

## 17. Figure

- Poissonniers    Comment les freres de Joseph luy despoulierent sa robbe et l'estaindirent au sang du boucq, *signiffiant*:  
 Bouchiers        Comment piteusement Jhesus devoit estre despoulie nud de ses vestemens devant la croix au mont de Calvaire avant estre mis en la croix, et [on] joue sur ses vestemens.

## 18. Figures

- Orphevres        Comment Moÿse fist eslever ung serpent d'arrain contre la morsure des autres serpens a ceulx qui le regardoient  
 Tristrans de        Comment Abraham volut immoler Isacq, *lesdis figures signiffiant*:  
 toille  
 Merchiers        Comment Jhesus devoit estre eslevé en croix comme pecheur et avec pecheurs mis comme larron.

- Chiriers<sup>34</sup>      Conment Jhesus après sa mort fut au Limbe racheter les anciens  
peres.  
Boulenghiers    Conment Jhesus ressuscita avec ses cinq plaies hors du tombeau.  
Taverniers      Conment Jhesus viendra juger les mors et vifz.

[For the Lille procession

1. Figure

- Sack Porters    How Abraham sends his servant Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac  
and how this servant goes to Rebecca who gives him to drink,  
*signifying*:  
Plasterers      How God sends the angel Gabriel to greet the Virgin Mary and  
announce the mystery of the Incarnation.

2. Figure

- Wagoners      How Human Nature, tied to the tree of the knowledge of good and  
evil, cries mercy to Divine Wisdom who is watering an orchard  
from which Jesus is produced, *signifying*:  
Ropers          How Jesus was to be born of a virgin with no violation of her  
virginity.

3. Figure

- Cobblers        How the angel of God wanted to kill Moses because his son was  
not circumcised, and his wife circumcised his son, *signifying*:  
Cask Makers    How Jesus, minister of circumcision and the circumcised, was to  
and Basket      observe the law of circumcision, and infants should be  
Makers           circumcised.

4. Figure

- Fruiterers      How Solomon was adored by the queen of Sheba, who gave him  
great gifts, and by many other kings, *signifying*:  
Say Combers    How Jesus as God and man was to be adored by the queen  
Virgin Mary and by kings.

5. Figure

- Cappers        How the small child Samuel was taken to the Temple and presented  
to Eli the chief priest, *signifying*:  
Pewterers      How Jesus was to be presented in the Temple by the Virgin Mary to  
Saint Simeon and redeemed by two pigeons or two turtledoves.

<sup>34</sup> In the manuscript the bakers' pageant comes before that of the wax chandlers, which puts the two scenes out of chronological order. In the established order of the guilds in the procession, however, the wax chandlers precede the bakers. I have therefore reversed the order of the two pageants.

## 6. Figure

- Oil Merchants How Pharaoh had the Hebrew children drowned, among whom Moses was saved by his mother in the watertight basket, *signifying*:
- Joiners How Herod out of a lust to reign had the innocents killed, but Jesus was saved by his mother and Joseph, who took him to Egypt.

## 7. Figure

- Painters and Glaziers How young king Solomon, seated on his throne, demonstrated his wisdom and discretion before his people in the sentence given to two harlots regarding the live infant, *signifying*:
- Barbers How Jesus at the age of twelve years was to demonstrate his wisdom to the doctors, being in their midst.

## 8. Figure

- Tailors How Elisha has the leper Naaman wash in the river Jordan, and his flesh again becomes as white as that of a little child, *signifying*:
- Curriers The giant.
- Carpenters How Saint John the Baptist was to baptize Jesus Christ in the Jordan to show the efficacy of the sacrament of baptism, which removes all sins.

## 9. Figure

- Masons How manna rained from heaven on the children of Israel, *signifying*:
- Fullers How Jesus was miraculously to feed a great many people with a little bread and a few fish.

## 10. Figure

- Velveteen Weavers How Melchizedek makes an offering of bread and wine to Abraham, returning from the battle, *signifying*:
- Say Weavers How, on the day of the Last Supper, Jesus, the true bishop, was to give his body and blood to his apostles under the species of bread and wine.

## 11. Figure

- Wool Weavers How Joab, while kissing Amasa, treacherously killed him, *signifying*:
- Rag Merchants How Judas came to the garden on the Mount of Olives and was to betray Our Lord with a kiss.

## 12. Figure

- Shoemakers How Delilah bound Samson and delivered him to the Philistines, *signifying*:
- Shearers How Jesus was to be bound by the Jews and taken to Annas, and Malcus struck him a blow.

## 13. Figure

Coopers      How the prophet Micaiah was struck on the cheek and persecuted for speaking the truth to king Ahab, *signifying*:

Blacksmiths      How Jesus was to be maligned and buffeted in the house of Caiaphas, with the Scribes and Pharisees present.

## 14. Figure

Coppersmiths      How a concubine of King Darius placed the crown on the king's head, then removed it and boldly struck him, *signifying*:

Dyers              How Jesus was to be scourged with a whip, crowned with thorns, and mocked by giving him a reed in the house of Pilate.

## 15. Figure

Retailers of wool cloth      How Job was seated on the dunghill, naked and covered with sores from the sole of his foot to the top of his head, *signifying*:

Brewers              How Jesus, to stir the Jews to compassion, was to be beaten, scourged, and shown to them by Pilate, saying: 'Ecce homo'.

## 16. Figure

Tanners      How Abraham had his son Isaac carry the wood with which he was to be sacrificed, while he carried the fire and the sword, *signifying*:

Furriers      How Jesus was condemned by Pilate to carry his cross to the place he was to be crucified. *Note that the furriers say it is more appropriate to show how Jesus carried his cross.*

## 17. Figure

Fish Merchants      How Joseph's brothers stripped him of his coat and stained it with the blood of a kid, *signifying*:

Butchers              How piteously Jesus was to be stripped naked of his garments in front of the cross on Calvary before being put on the cross, and [the soldiers] cast lots for his garments.

## 18. Figures

Goldsmiths      How Moses raised a brazen serpent to heal the bite of other serpents for those who looked upon it;

Linen Weavers      How Abraham wanted to sacrifice Isaac, *both figures signifying*:

Mercers              How Jesus was to be raised on the cross like a sinner and be put with sinners as a thief.

Wax Chandlers      How Jesus after his death was in Limbo to redeem the patriarchs.

Bakers              How Jesus with his five wounds rose from the tomb.

Vintners              How Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead.]

## RHETORICIANS AND THE DRAMA: THE FRANCOPHONE TRADITION

Lynette R. Muir

Although the Chambers of Rhetoric and their plays have dominated studies of the early drama of the Dutch-speaking Low Countries, there has been almost nothing written about the Rhetoricians of the francophone towns of Hainault, Brabant, Artois, and *Flandres gallicante*.<sup>1</sup> The absence of any surviving play-texts is probably the principal reason for this, but the situation is, ironically, also due to the scholar who did more than anyone else to make known such plays as do survive from the region: namely Gustave Cohen, editor of the Liège plays, discoverer and editor of the important texts and accounts of the Mons *Passion* of 1501.<sup>2</sup>

In the introduction to his great volume of Mons texts and records, Cohen included a list of known performances of *Mystères* in Mons between 1433 and 1538 in which he briefly mentions the Rhetoricians of Mons and refers to their organization of contests of *Jeux de rhétorique* between neighbourhood groups or among the towns of the region. However, inspired apparently by the French tradition of thinking of Rhetoricians as exclusively devoted to poetry, Cohen ignores the clear indications of a dramatic element in these contests which he glosses in footnotes and the index as ‘Concours de poésie’.<sup>3</sup> However, it is clear from the

<sup>1</sup> The Dukes of Burgundy divided the province into *Flandres gallicante* in the south with its administrative capital in Lille and *Flandres flamingante* in the north with its administration in Gent.

<sup>2</sup> *Nativités et moralités liégeoises du moyen âge*, ed. by Gustave Cohen (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1953). *Le Livre de Conduite du Mystère de la Passion joué à Mons en 1501* [hereafter *Mons*], ed. by Gustave Cohen (Paris: Champion, 1925), pp. xi–xix.

<sup>3</sup> *Mons*, ed. by Cohen, pp. 527, 553, 574, xlvi, lxiii. At the end of the introduction to the *Passion* material, Cohen emphasizes again this attitude: ‘C’est en français que les Rhétoriciens

surviving records that various groups and confraternities, including Rhetoricians, did perform plays not only in Mons but in other francophone towns of the Burgundian Netherlands — especially Béthune, Douai, Lille, St-Omer, and Valenciennes — from the early fifteenth century to the middle of the sixteenth. In the present essay I want to re-examine specific references to Rhetoricians and try to establish exactly how they were involved in this urban drama.

When reading through the records — mainly from civic accounts — of drama in these towns, one thing is clear: the Rhetoricians were only one of a number of different performing groups and they were not organized in chambers.<sup>4</sup> The records may simply refer to them as Rhetoricians without a group designation; for example, the '*rhétoriciens de Valenciennes*' are listed among the different drama groups which visited Cambrai in 1442–43,<sup>6</sup> and nearly a century later, in 1537, '*rhétoriciens de Valenciennes*' visited Mons to perform a play on the capture of Tunis by Emperor Charles V in 1535.<sup>7</sup>

In several towns the most usual group name used is *compagnie* or *compaignons*. Thus in Béthune in 1459 for the birth in Brabant of a son to the

[. . .] se disputent à Mons des prix, dont la valeur en argent montre l'importance qu'attachent les échevins de cette cité à la poésie ciselée avec soin' (It is in French [i.e. not in Walloon] that the Mons Rhetoricians [. . .] compete for prizes whose value in silver shows the importance that the *echevins* [aldermen] of the city attach to carefully crafted poetry). For details of the prizes see below, note 20.

<sup>4</sup> The exact significance of the French term *rhétoricien* is uncertain. Although some scholars including Gustave Cohen talk of *Chambres de rhétorique* there is no evidence of contemporary use of the term, and Justin de Pas specifically says that such chambers did not exist in St-Omer in contrast to their neighbours in Flanders: J. De Pas, 'Mystères et jeux scéniques à Saint-Omer aux XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles', *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de la Morinie*, 31 (1912–13), 343–77 (p. 347).

<sup>5</sup> In quotations from early sources I have deliberately retained the variety of medieval spellings for *rhétoricien* and the related forms. The form '*rhétoriqueur*', used in literary criticism for some early sixteenth-century poets mainly from the Burgundian Netherlands, was a later term not used in their own life time. The word has not survived in general usage in modern French.

<sup>6</sup> A. Durieux, 'Le théâtre à Cambrai avant et après 1789', *Mémoires de la Société d'émulation de Cambrai*, 39 (1883), 5–241: 'Sociétés de rhétorique et de joueurs sur cars venues à Cambrai' (p. 177).

<sup>7</sup> *Mons*, ed. by Cohen, p. xix. The Valenciennes records have not been published. The only specific reference to Rhetoricians in Valenciennes itself dates from 1547 when the Valenciennes groups held a contest among themselves at which prizes were awarded for the best decorated waggon and 'the best automaton'. The name of the prize winner is given but not, unfortunately, a description of the automaton: see H. d'Oultreman, *Histoire de Valenciennes* (Douai, 1639), p. 395.



Dauphin (the future Louis XI whose son reigned as Charles VIII) £12 14s. was paid for having stages built on which *jeulz de retoriqu* were performed. Various groups, who had all 'fait et présenté belle *compagnie*' and 'fait alumee' (these are evidently costumed companies carrying torches or candles), received payment: 'To those of the market [. . .] for having played *jeus de retorique* 12s. To those of the rue de Saint-Pry for [. . .] the best *jeu de retorique* 16s. To those of the rue du Rivage [. . .] for having played [*jeu*] *de retorique* 12s.' Not all groups did *jeu de retorique*; those of the rue Notre Dame, for example, received their 12s. for having performed plays *par personnaiges* and the rue du Cargnier are merely described as 'having played'.<sup>8</sup>

In Lille in 1499 to celebrate the birth of a daughter to Archduke Philip the Fair, many did plays and were rewarded with wine: 'Aux chiefz, capitaines et compaignons de l'Estrille, de le Gauguerie, de le Chancelerie, des Sotz, d'Engherant, des Amustans, de Rethorique, [. . . fifteen groups altogether].' They received thirty measures of *vin de Beaune*, that is, two measures for each group. Those 'de Rethorique' received an extra two measures for having performed the best play.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the plays staged for civic celebrations there are examples of all these different performing groups taking part in play contests. The most detailed account is from Mons where on the Feast of St Bartholomew, 24 August 1469, a *concours de rhetorique* was held between a number of neighbourhood groups (*faix par ceulx de le croix en Cantimpreit et des rues environ*),<sup>10</sup> with a prize for the one who would best present 'jeux de personnaiges de bonne et vraie rhetorique' (plays in good and true rhetoric) of five hundred to six hundred lines on a celestial or earthly subject, taking great care to 'louer, honorer, remercier Dieu nostre benoist Createur et Redempteur' (praise, honour, and thank God our blessed

<sup>8</sup> The Béthune records are printed in M. de La Fons de Mellicocq, 'Mélanges historiques', in J.-J. Champollien-Figeac, *Documents historiques inédits* (Paris: Didot, 1841–48), IV, 329–47 (p. 339). The companions of rhetoric reappear in Béthune in 1516 as 'compagnons de l'exercice du tres illustre et plaisant art de rhetorique' (companions of the illustrious and agreeable art of rhetoric), while in 1532 'ceulx de la rhetorique' from Arras gave a performance before the *echevins* of Lille, Archives Municipales de Lille [AML], *Livre de comptes*, 16266. No reason for the visit is given. In Cambrai 1526–27 the authorities paid 40s. to the *compaignons retoriciens* who in two groups and companies [*compaignies*] performed two plays with entertainments and festivities for the feast of St Scholastica (February 10, the patroness of the town (p. 165).

<sup>9</sup> AML, *Livre de comptes*, 16236. I am grateful to Alan Knight for this reference.

<sup>10</sup> The use of 'le' for the feminine article is typical of Picard. See *Les Mystères de la Procession de Lille*, ed. by Alan E. Knight (Geneva: Droz, 2001), 1: *Le Pentateuque*, p. 109.

Creator and Redeemer). The contest lasted several days and the prize of a live eagle wearing a gold crown worth a noble was won by the *Compagnie du Marché* (i.e. the Grand Place where the Hotel de Ville was and is located.) The company from the rue d'Havr  (a street still leading into the Grand Place) won the second prize of a live swan wearing a collar made from an ounce of silver.<sup>11</sup>

As in the Dutch-speaking provinces, many contests were between different towns. The earliest, also from Mons, may have been a simple debate, though it involved groups from several towns. In 1431 the 'bourgeois de Mons qui se nommoient Rethoriciens' (the citizens of Mons who called themselves Rhetoricians) joined up with those from Valenciennes, Douay, Cambrai, Hesdin, and other local towns 'en l'abbaye de Liesse' (at the abbey of Joy), because the *abb * of that place called Gilles Du Cesne, a worthy and learned person, had made it known that a *dispute de rhetorique* would be held in the said abbey to settle the following question: *Pourquoy la paix ne cognoissoit le royaume de France* (Why peace was unknown in the kingdom of France). The said *abb * awarded prizes for the best answers, and those from Hesdin carried off the first prize: a silver pax of eight ounces of silver. Those from Valenciennes had the second: a very fine silver Agnus Dei.<sup>12</sup>

Titles such as *abb * and *prince* are very common in France as well as in the Low Countries, where they seem to be used particularly, as here, for the leading organization in a town, such as the *Puy de plaisance* in Mons, *Prince de jonesse* in B thune, *Abb  de Liesse* in Arras, *Premier des Soudans* from Aire.<sup>13</sup> Cambrai's principal group was led by the *Abb  de l'escache profit* (without profit) who frequently figures in the town accounts as receiving money to help in his role as a sort of town ambassador for a year: in 1465–66, for example, he and his *moines* (monks) visited Douai, Arras, and Valenciennes.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Mons*, ed. by Cohen, p. xv.

<sup>12</sup> Champollien-Figeac, *Documents*, B thune, p. 344. F. Faber, *Les origines du th  tre fran ais en Belgique depuis son origine jusqu'  nos jours, d'apr s des documents in dits reposant aux archives g n ral du royaume* (Brussels: F. J. Olivier, 1878), I, 6–7. Faber is quoting from the then unpublished manuscript 'Annales de Hainaut' by P. Vinchant, printed by the *Bibliophiles de Mons* in 1932.

<sup>13</sup> Champollien-Figeac, *Documents*, B thune, p. 344.

<sup>14</sup> They also had a local annual feast day called the *vingti me* which was the twentieth day after Christmas (i.e. well within the carnival period), to which groups from other towns were invited: in 1503–04, wine was presented to four *echevins* from Valenciennes who with the societies of that town had come to Cambrai for the festival. This seems to have been an annual visit (Durieux, 'Le th  tre   Cambrai', p. 159).

There are a number of examples of groups being rewarded for having won a prize elsewhere and thereby bringing glory to their home town. Thus in Cambrai, in 1481 some *compaignons retorisiens* of the said city were awarded two *pots* of wine when they returned from Douai where they had won a *pris d'argent* on the feast of the Assumption.<sup>15</sup>

A notable group in St-Omer was that led by one Jean Wastelet, a barber. In 1444 when he had been in Brussels for several days playing plays in verse (*jouant jeux de personnaiges en rime*), he received 25s. on his return *par courtoisie*. Some twenty years later, in 1462, he and his friends went to Aire where for four days they performed in the evenings 'plusieurs jeux de personnaiges en moralité' (several morality plays) so successfully that they won the first prize and two others. The town gave them £12 for their expenses. The following year, in Béthune, he played *jeux de personnaiges* and because he had played for the honour of the town (without apparently winning anything), he received, *en courtoisie* 13s. 6d.<sup>16</sup>

St-Omer's involvement with the drama was not exclusively francophone: there was a Flemish-speaking quarter near St Margaret's church, and in 1476 Gherard Staes was paid for performing a *sotye en flamencq* on a chariot on Innocents Day. In 1442 'letters patent' were sent from Bruges offering prizes for the best play on the Holy Spirit, and in 1539 a messenger from Gent was paid 30s. for having brought news of the prizes on offer at the forthcoming *Jeux de rhetorique* in that town.<sup>17</sup> This famous competition was noted for the subversive nature of some of the plays which caused problems with the Spanish authorities. We have no evidence of St-Omer's going to either Bruges or Gent but it is interesting that they were invited.

In 1498, the *arbalestiers* (crossbowmen) of Mons won a prize in Gent which was celebrated by a banquet at which 'some Rhetoricians from Mons [. . .] gave several entertainments [*recreations*] and pleasures [*contentemens*] to the audience'. The names of the five *rhetoriciens* involved were Hierosme Fosset, Jaquemin Les-crignier, le petit Jacquet, Jaquemin Bosquet, and Rogerie.<sup>18</sup> All five subsequently

<sup>15</sup> Durieux, 'Le théâtre à Cambrai', p. 155.

<sup>16</sup> De Pas, 'Mystères et jeux scéniques à Saint-Omer', p. 362.

<sup>17</sup> De Pas, 'Mystères et jeux scéniques à Saint-Omer', pp. 361, 363. A messenger from Gent went to Compiègne in 1428 with notice of an archery contest, and St-Omer also sent to Compiègne a similar invitation: A. Sorel, 'Notice sur les mystères représentés à Compiègne au moyen âge', *Bulletin de la société historique de Compiègne*, 2 (1875), 35–55.

<sup>18</sup> *Mons*, ed. by Cohen, p. xv, quoting Vinchant.

had roles in the 1501 *Passion* play (if we accept Cohen's spelling variations),<sup>19</sup> which suggests that the Mons Rhetoricians did not take part in the *Jeux de rhétorique* held in the evenings of the play-week and to which fifteen towns were invited, including, besides some more local ones, Arras, Amiens, Cambrai, Douai, Lille, and Tournai. Payments are listed in the Mons accounts for messengers to these towns to make known the date fixed for the *Passion* play and the 'pris et jeuveau pour les ju de retorique'<sup>20</sup> (prizes and jewels for the Rhetoricians plays).<sup>21</sup> Of the fifteen towns invited, only six seem to have accepted, judging by the payments to the Rhetoricians of the town of Cambrai (*venue en icelle ville pour le jeu de retorique*), and 'for the same reason' to those from Maubeuge, Ath, Nivelles, Braisne, and Valenciennes. The last five, who are all from Hainault, received an *estier* of wine (an ancient measure equal to a gallon) and those from Cambrai received four *kennes*, a larger amount, perhaps because they came from further away.<sup>22</sup> The day after the end of the *Passion* play, some of the *echevins* met to decide who should receive the prizes and to arrange for them to be delivered, but we are not told who won.

<sup>19</sup> *Mons*, ed. by Cohen, p. xv and the Index of Actors.

<sup>20</sup> The word 'jewel', regularly used for the prize in a contest, gave the name to the *landjuweelen*, which were originally contests of the Archers' guilds in bilingual Brabant, the prize awarded being the *juweel*, a costly object made of silver, given to the victor of the *land*, i.e. the Duchy of Brabant. A *landjuweel* is a name exclusively used for a series of Rhetoricians competitions in Brabant. The Mons authorities allocated one mark of silver for their prizes: the first was a cup (*hanap*) weighing three ounces, the second a goblet weighing two ounces, and the third a spoon weighing one ounce; all three bore the arms of the town. The remaining two ounces (the *marc de Troyes* contained eight ounces of silver) was to be used for minor prizes at the discretion of the organizers (*Mons*, ed. by Cohen, p. 590); they chose to have twenty-seven small silver shields (*écussons*) made (p. 553). A cloth merchant was paid 3s. 6d. for a yard of black material on which the prizes to be given to the *jeuwers de rhétorique* were hung (p. 581).

<sup>21</sup> *Mons*, ed. by Cohen, p. 527. Although Cohen glosses *Ju de retorice* as 'Concours de poésie' (poetry contest) there is no reason to suppose that it was not plays that these visiting companies performed each evening after Vespers near the fountain, in the Grand Place but outside the enclosed area dedicated to the *Passion* (p. 589); the description of the prizes on offer specifically refers to *enbatemens* which Cohen himself translates as 'jeux par personnages, moralités, farces' (*Mons*, ed. by Cohen, p. 590).

<sup>22</sup> Cohen's note on *kenne* is not very clear but suggests each one held two litres (*Mons*, p. 540). By this date the Cambrésien region, which had been part of the Burgundian Netherlands until 1477, had been rejoined to France, as of course had Amiens, which was not merely invited to the contest but which had lent the text and secrets for the play.

In the sixteenth century there is a gradual increase in the role of the Rhetoricians in the drama, not merely as performers but as organizers. In Béthune in 1516 at the request of the *compagnons de l'exercice du tres illustre et plaisant art de rhetorique*, the magistrates agreed to commute the 40s. given annually to the Bishop of Fools into a *double croix en argent* to be given 'to whoever performed the finest morality play [*jouerait la plus belle moralité*] because the said *art de rhetorique* is a pleasant, joyful and good activity for the young people'.<sup>23</sup> Later in the century when, probably in response to the pressures of the religious struggles, the celebrations for Corpus Christi became increasingly elaborate, the day's activities were still not exclusively religious. Thus, in 1548, after the procession with its biblical tableaux, six measures of wine were given to 'those rhetoriciens [*de la Rhetorique*] who performed a morality and, thereafter, the farce'.<sup>24</sup>

In 1520 there is a record of the Lille Rhetoricians acting as censors: 'To Jan and Andrieu Pietdeau, brothers, and Collart de Saint Legier, all Rhetoricians [*retorissiens*] for their salary for having, by order of the *echevins*, read and examined [*visité et examiné*] all the plays [to be performed] on this said day [June 5] both after dinner and after supper to entertain the people [. . .] to each of them 12s.'<sup>25</sup> This brings me to the question which I have not so far addressed: that of authorship.

The authors of these plays are rarely named, but in 1530, for the Coronation of Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor, the *Compaignons de la rethorique* in Mons did several plays and Sire Philippe Loquet, priest, and some others were paid £6 by the town for some *jeux et rethorique* composed by them on the subject.<sup>26</sup> Was

<sup>23</sup> The *echevins* in Béthune also took over the role of the Bishop of Fools, while in Lille in the sixteenth century the organization of the Procession was taken away from the Bishop of Fools (one of the clergy of St Peter's church) and given to the town authorities: see Alan Knight, 'The Sponsorship of Drama in Lille', in *Studies in Honor of Hans-Erich Keller*, ed. by R. Pickens (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1993), pp. 275–85.

<sup>24</sup> Champollien-Figeac, *Documents*, Béthune, p. 331, n. 1. For details of the Béthune Corpus Christi tableaux presented by the trade guilds, see Louis Petit de Julleville, *Les Mystères* (Paris: Hachette, 1880; repr., Geneva: Slatkine, 1969), II, 211–13.

<sup>25</sup> AML 16255, fol. 155<sup>r</sup>. The plays in question are those for the annual *Procession de Lille*. As tableaux they decorated the processional route and then the performances took place later in the day with prizes for the best plays. The recently discovered manuscript of seventy-two of these plays is currently being edited by Alan Knight to whom I am indebted for these references.

<sup>26</sup> Cohen (*Mons*, pp. xviii–xix) is here quoting from L. Devillers, *Analectes Montois* (Mons: Dequesne-Masquillier, 1860–69), IV, 33, which I have not been able to locate in any library.

it perhaps as a result of such activities that on 13 May 1533 the Mons Rhetoricians were formally incorporated as a Chamber.<sup>27</sup>

Plays performed by Rhetoricians were obviously written by them but what about the neighbourhood groups? Where did they get their plays? A payment in Béthune in 1456 indicates that plays might be borrowed from one town to the next: 'To those of the church 20s., to those from the market 20s. and to those from the shore [*rivage*] 20s., for having at the request of the authorities [*mesdits seigneurs*] sent for several plays from Cambrai, Arras, and others which they performed over several days for the arrival of and in the presence of our most redoubted lord the Comte de Charolais<sup>28</sup> in order to please and delight him in his town of Béthune.'<sup>29</sup> But who had written these borrowed plays? Did the groups with names like *puy de plaisance* or *abbé de liesse* include Rhetoricians? The answer is possibly: yes. In the Cambrai accounts, payment is made to 'G[i]rard de Raborie, *rhetoricien de l'escache profit*, for having made and composed the poem performed (*joué par personnages*) on the feast of Epiphany last (1501) paid for expenses [. . .]'. The rest of the phrase is lost in a hole in the parchment.<sup>30</sup>

(Many books and manuscripts, including the accounts of the Mons *Passion*, were destroyed in Mons in World War II.) It is not clear from the citation whether the £6 was for both the performers and the authors, or if the latter were part of the group though it seems likely. Béthune also celebrated the accession over a period of three days and was joined by two actors (*joueurs*) from Douai who performed plays and farces (*jeux et farses*, Champollien-Figeac, *Documents*, Béthune, p. 329).

<sup>27</sup> In 1561, between 5 July and the end of September, the town accounts list a number of payments to one Jean Gheumelz, variously referred to as a carpenter and a cabinet-maker (*escrignier*, a Hainault dialect word), for work done *pour les Rethorysiens* in the *chambre Notre Dame en la Maison de Paix*. The work included a party wall and a door. This *chambre* was formerly the big gothic hall on the first floor of the town hall from which in 1501 the wife of the Bailiff of Hainault and other dignitaries had watched the *Passion* play. The hall is described in these accounts variously as being *la chambre de la rethorique* (twice), *la chambre des rethorisyens* (three times), and the *chambre de rethorique* (twice): A. Lacroix, *Souvenirs sur Jacques de Guise, historien du Hainaut* (Mons: Hoyois, 1846), pp. 7–8. The fact that the town spent a considerable sum of money on having the hall fitted up for the Rhetoricians and evidently gave it to them gratis suggests they had become an important group in the capital of Hainault.

<sup>28</sup> The future Duke Charles the Bold, son of Philip the Good.

<sup>29</sup> Champollien-Figeac, *Documents*, Béthune, p. 338.

<sup>30</sup> Durieux, 'Le théâtre à Cambrai', p. 160. The actual performers of plays are referred to as *compaignons joueurs* in 1511 when they receive £1T for expenses incurred in rehearsing a play (p. 161). The *livre tournois* was a common currency at this date; many entries omit the 'T'. For the *Abbé de l'escache profit* and Rhetoricians see above, p. 212 and note 14.

It may be significant here that the plays entered for the Procession de Lille,<sup>31</sup> like those entered for the 1469 Mons local contest, had to be in *bone et vraie rhetorique*. So were they written by Rhetoricians for the groups who performed them? The answer is to be found in the introduction to the first volume of the edition of the plays by Alan Knight.<sup>32</sup> The section on *les auteurs* includes citations from a number of prologues to the plays in which although ‘rien de précis n’est exprimé’ (no precise information is given) the overall evidence suggests that the plays were written by *clercs*<sup>33</sup> and then handed over to the groups of actors: the play of *Joab et Abner*, taken from II Kings, was ‘par clers estraitte et a nous presentee / hors du latin en vulgaire translatee / en rime mis aussy’ (extracted by clerks, translated from Latin into the vulgar tongue and versified).<sup>34</sup> There are other references which imply that the clerks in question might be members of the particular neighbourhood group concerned, as in the example from Cambrai quoted above.

It is significant that although the Lille play-texts were meant to be original, there is one which includes material borrowed from the so-called Arras *Passion*.<sup>35</sup> In one of the two Annunciation plays included in the manuscript, the scene of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth includes about a hundred lines from the Arras *Passion*,<sup>36</sup> most of them being the elaborately versified sixty-line rendering of the *Magnificat* (lines 368–427) at the end of which Elizabeth exclaims: ‘O ma cousine, quel cantique / quel langage, quel rethorique!’ (O my cousin, what a canticle, what language, what rhetoric!). The only difference in

<sup>31</sup> See note 25 above.

<sup>32</sup> *Mystères de la Procession de Lille*, ed. by Knight. This volume only contains eleven Old Testament plays, but the extensive introduction deals with the whole collection in considerable detail.

<sup>33</sup> *Mystères de la Procession de Lille*, ed. by Knight, p. 74. In the prologue to the tenth play in this volume, *La Manne du Ciel*, the author explains it is intended: ‘pour retoricque entretenir / [et] joie et leessee exauchier’ (‘to maintain rhetoric and exalt joy and happiness’, p. 479).

<sup>34</sup> *Mystères de la Procession de Lille*, ed. by Knight, p. 77.

<sup>35</sup> *Mystères de la Procession de Lille*, ed. by Knight, p. 33. I am grateful to Alan Knight for sending me details of these borrowings, before the Annunciation play was published.

<sup>36</sup> *Le mystère de la passion d’Arras*, ed. by Jules-Marie Richard (Arras: Société du Pas-de-Calais, 1891; repr., Geneva: Slatkine, 1976). The name Arras refers only to the modern location of the play, though it is linguistically definitely linked with the Artois/Picardy region: see Graham A. Runnalls, ‘Les mystères de la passion en langue française: tentative de classement’, *Romania*, 114 (1996), 468–516 (pp. 482–86).

Arras is the use of *de not quel* before *rhétorique* (line 1324).<sup>37</sup> This and many other examples of complex versification in the Lille texts show that the requirement of *bone rhétorique* was met by the authors of these plays. As it also reveals a similar rhetorical skill in Arras, it seems logical to suggest that both were the work of Rhetoricians.

The Arras play has often been attributed to Eustache Marcadé, author of the play of the *Vengeance Jesus Christ*. There is no space in this essay to deal fully with the question of Marcadé's authorship of Arras,<sup>38</sup> but it may be pointed out that the manuscript, written c. 1460–70, many years after Marcadé's death, specifically attributes to him only the Vengeance play, not the preceding *Passion*.

The claims of common authorship are based on dialectal and other verbal and structural similarities, but since we have no extant earlier text of either play, these can just as easily be the work of the later redactor who combined them in one manuscript (with miniatures clearly linked with the art of the Low Countries)<sup>39</sup> possibly for (or perhaps as a result of) the performances of the two plays in Mons, the *Passion* in 1455 and the *Vengeance* in 1458.<sup>40</sup>

There are a number of other known Rhetoricians in the francophone Netherlands in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who wrote plays. George Chastelain, courtier and chronicler to the Dukes of Burgundy, composed a play to celebrate the Peace of Péronne signed in 1468 between Louis XI and Charles the

<sup>37</sup> It is interesting that in the second, probably later, Visitation play the *Magnificat* is limited to four lines.

<sup>38</sup> The *Vengeance* play is still unpublished. Stephen K. Wright, in his *The Vengeance of our Lord, Medieval Dramatizations of the Destruction of Jerusalem* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1949) gives details of Marcadé's life and work, including his membership of a prestigious literary society whose *ministres* were specialists in the science of rhetoric. But his claim that 'Martin le Franc praised him as one of the most outstanding Rhetoricians of the age' (p. 99) is not correct. Le Franc actually places Marcadé last among the poets who are renowned: Christine de Pizan receives the highest praise; Machaut is described as *grant rethorique*; Alain [Chartier] has *le mieux baladé* (written the best *ballades*); and others have praised 'Castel, Nesson and Mercadé': Gaston Paris, 'Un Poème inédit de Martin Le Franc', *Romania*, 41 (1887), 383–437 (p. 415).

<sup>39</sup> See Jane Oakshott, 'The Arras Miniatures: Inadmissible Evidence?', *Early Drama Art and Music Review*, 14 (1992), 64–73.

<sup>40</sup> *Mons*, ed. by Cohen, pp. xiii–xiv. It is unfortunate that Wright omitted these references from his list of performances (*Vengeance*, pp. 105–06). The actual date of the original text of the *Vengeance* is unknown but must have been before Marcadé's death in 1440. The three-year gap between the two performances could account for the reference, in the prologue to the *Vengeance* play, to the omission of the *Passion* because: 'Aultrefois a esté joué / par nous en icy démontré' (It has already been performed and presented by us here): see Wright, *Vengeance*, p. 104.



Rash. Petit de Julleville claims it is not 'une oeuvre théâtrale' (a dramatic piece), but it was presented at the Chateau d'Aire in the presence of the Duke and the King.<sup>41</sup> It is a morality written almost entirely in lyric stanzas which may suggest the form of some of the other lost plays on Peace, such as that staged by various groups in Béthune in 1493 'the day peace was announced',<sup>42</sup> or by the Rhetoricians in Mons for the peace between Charles V and Francis I in 1538.<sup>43</sup>

For the Mons *Passion* of 1501 the town borrowed its text from Amiens which had performed it the previous year. It is based mainly on the Gréban/Michel *Passion* with the addition of some six thousand lines added by the scribe, Nicolas le Roux. Many of them feature a morality-play character, *Humain Lignaige*, who forms a link between the different Old Testament scenes.<sup>44</sup>

Among those present at the Mons *Passion* of 1501 was the Rhetorician Jean Molinet of Valenciennes, to whom is attributed the earliest version of the *Passion en rime franchoise* (also known as the Valenciennes Twenty-Day Play because it is preserved in that city's library). The play is based, like Mons, on the Gréban/Michel *Passion*, but it also shares the original Flood play found in Mons<sup>45</sup> and includes extracts from the Arras *Passion*.<sup>46</sup> There is no record of the *Passion en rime franchoise* ever having been performed. It certainly was not done at

<sup>41</sup> Louis Petit de Julleville, *Le Répertoire du théâtre comique en France au moyen âge* (Paris: Cerf, 1886), p. 89. G. Doutrepont also mentions a play by Chastelain on *La mort du duc Philippe* in *La littérature à la cour de Bourgogne* (Paris: Bibliothèque du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, 1909), p. 363.

<sup>42</sup> Champollien-Figeac, *Documents*, Béthune, p. 342. The *confrairies des arbalestriers et des Archiers de plaisance*, and the *clers de St Betremieu* each received 8s. for their play. In 1509, wine was given to a group 'qui avoient joué un beau jeu de la paix' (p. 344).

<sup>43</sup> They received 40s.; some players who performed two farces received thirty; the occasion was also marked by a procession (*Mons*, ed. by Cohen, p. xix).

<sup>44</sup> See Graham A. Runnalls, 'The Mons Passion Play of 1501', paper given at the Leeds Medieval Congress of 2001 and published as 'La *Passion* de Mons (1501): étude sur le texte et sur ses rapports avec la *Passion* d'Amiens (1500)', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 80 (2002), 1143–88. As neither the original Amiens text nor the complete versions of the Mons play have survived, we know little of the content of this morality, but its allegorical approach (for example the pre-Flood scene of *Humain Lignaige* having an orgy with the Seven Deadly Sins) is similar to that found in many Rhetoricians plays in the Dutch-speaking Low Countries; see W. M. H. Hummelen, *Repertorium van het rederijkersdrama, 1500–ca.1620* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968).

<sup>45</sup> See M. F. Foley, 'Two Versions of the Flood: The Valenciennes Twenty-Day Play and the Mystère de la Passion de Mons', *Tréteaux*, 2.1 (1979), 21–39.

<sup>46</sup> For details of the debate on Molinet's possible authorship, see Runnalls, 'Les mystères de la passion', pp. 497–504.

Valenciennes, which in 1547 presented in twenty-five days<sup>47</sup> the last major passion play in Hainault.

The organization of this play presents some interesting contrasts with the civic productions of Mons and Amiens for it was organized, produced, and performed by a group of citizens, some of whom seem to have been Rhetoricians, for among the *superintendents* was the *Prince de plaisance* of Valenciennes for that year, the head of the Rhetoricians who were still flourishing in the town as in so many Dutch-speaking provinces.<sup>48</sup> The importance of the *Prince's* status is attested by the reference to his having to visit Lille and Tournai before the play which meant a delay of two days.<sup>49</sup> The contract continues with a list of those who want to take part and the roles they prefer though they all promise to undertake the parts allocated to them. This was all fairly typical also of the civic plays, but it is peculiar to Valenciennes that the costumes were paid for by the company; normally actors provided their own. On the other hand, in this play the profits are not taken by the civic authorities who paid for the stage, but shared among the players according to their contribution to the costs. This contract and the general organization of the play are very similar to those of the Dutch Chambers of Rhetoric.<sup>50</sup>

By 1560, accusations of disorder and heresy were being levelled against the Rhetoricians. In Valenciennes the leading citizens forbade their children to attend 'telles rhetoriques' (such rhetorical displays) because they incited youth to bad behaviour and 'impudicité' (immodesty) as well as containing *heresies*.<sup>51</sup> Throughout the Spanish Netherlands plays were soon going to be replaced by a more realistic and horrifying kind of spectacle — the auto-da-fé.

<sup>47</sup> This play, like the *Passion en rime franchoise*, is still unpublished, but a detailed account of the content with reproductions of the numerous miniatures is given in Elie Konigson, *La Représentation d'un mystère de la Passion à Valenciennes en 1547* (Paris: CNRS, 1969).

<sup>48</sup> Rhetoricians are the only performing group from Valenciennes ever mentioned. See note 7 above.

<sup>49</sup> The contract is printed by Konigson and is translated by Elsa Strietman and Lynette R. Muir in 'The Low Countries', in *The Medieval European Stage 500–1500*, ed. by William Tydeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Documents H.58–60.

<sup>50</sup> See for example the arrangements at Diest: Strietman and Muir, 'Low Countries', H.6. The Diest Chamber, like Valenciennes, had a *Prince*, as well as a *facteur* who was responsible for organizing the plays.

<sup>51</sup> Faber, *Les origines du théâtre français*, p. 12.

## WORTHY WOMEN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: THE AMBACHTSVROUWEN OF THE *LEUVEN OMMEGANG*

Meg Twycross

The celebrated *ommegang* of Leuven, as recorded in the 1593–94 illustrated account by Willem Boonen, Clerk of the Registry and local historian, in his monumental manuscript *History of Leuven*,<sup>1</sup> is a fascinating cultural construct, and among its most fascinating segments is the cortège of the *ambachtsvrouwen* (guilds' women) described by Boonen as the *xxxiiij historien vande weerdighe vrouwen* (thirty-four histories of the Worthy Women).<sup>2</sup> This sequence of Old Testament heroines is presented in a lively Baroque series of illustrations which is, among other things, a major source of information about theatrical biblical costume at the end of the sixteenth century. This essay attempts to answer some questions about the content and principles of organization of this collection of very varied characters, from Rachel to Jahel, and from Deborah to Susanna.

The *ommegang* was a religious procession in honour of Our Lady *Sedes Sapientiae*, patroness of the city and subsequently of the University, which took place

<sup>1</sup> The manuscript (hereafter called the *Liber Boonen*) is in the Museum Mertens-van der Kelen. All textual references are to the manuscript. Image are printed here by kind permission of the Museum Mertens-Van der Kelen, Leuven. See Willem Boonen, *Geschiedenis van Leuven geschreven in de jaren 1593 en 1594*, ed. by Edward van Even (Leuven: Fonteyn, 1880), pp. 245–56. Van Even, the Leuven archivist, published an earlier edition of the *ommegang* material alone: *L'Omgang de Louvain, dissertation historique et archéologique sur ce célèbre cortège communal* (Leuven: Fonteyn; Brussels: Arnold, 1863). I am preparing a new bilingual edition of the *ommegang* material with Guido Latré.

<sup>2</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 420<sup>v</sup>. The Women remained a highlight of the procession in the seventeenth century, to judge from the emphasis laid upon them in the titles of the various tourist pamphlets describing the procession: Van Even, *L'Omgang de Louvain*, p. 38.

annually on the Feast of her Nativity (8 September). It had been doing so time out of mind — according to tradition, it was established to commemorate the defeat of the Vikings at Leuven on 1 September 891 — and it was to run up to 1681.

Like all medieval and Renaissance processions, it was a complex organism, consisting of a number of different components which were all related to the event, but not necessarily in a direct way to each other. Thanks to Leuven's remarkably well-preserved civic accounts,<sup>3</sup> we can track its development from a relatively restrained religious procession with civic and ecclesiastical dignitaries accompanied by lights, to the first appearance, in 1394, of costumed characters — apostles, prophets, martyrs, and virgins — and then in 1408 the first processional floats. These presented the Death, Burial, Assumption, and Coronation of the Virgin, and a perambulating Jesse Tree with branches of green wax borne by the Prophets. In the decades which followed floats came and went, and the procession was joined by the local Archers' Guilds and their patron saints; the University, founded 1425; the local trade and craft guilds, the *ambachten* (1433); folkloric figures like the Four Sons of Aymon (1428) and the Knight of the Swan (1460); the Giant Hercules with his wife, made of wickerwork (1463); a series of camels and other marvellous beasts (starting 1482, also made of wickerwork); and the ladies central to this discussion, the thirty-four Worthy Women of the Old Testament, with their entourages.

As far as I know the Worthy Women,<sup>4</sup> presented as a group, are unique of their kind. Individual examples appear in contemporary Royal Entries celebrating female rulers, such as that of Joanna the Mad into Brussels on 9 December 1496, where Deborah, Jael, Judith, Esther, and others provide role models for the young princess.<sup>5</sup> But the Leuven cortège are a well-nigh comprehensive, chronologically arranged sequence of Old Testament heroines, starting with Sarah the wife of Abraham and ending with the Mother of the Maccabees. Each has an entourage, ranging in number from two (the Mother of Samson, the Widow of

<sup>3</sup> See Meg Twycross, 'The Leuven Ommegang and Leuven City Archives', *European Medieval Drama*, 4 (2000), 77–90.

<sup>4</sup> I use the term as it would have been used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: to imply worth or value, as in 'The Nine Worthies'. They might perhaps have been called *worshipful*: the contemporary English equivalent of Dutch *eerbaer*.

<sup>5</sup> See Gordon Kipling, 'Brussels, Joanna of Castile, and the Art of Theatrical Illustration', in *Porci ante Margaritam: Essays in Honour of Meg Twycross*, ed. by Sarah Carpenter, Pamela King, and Peter Meredith, special issue, *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 32 (2001), 229–54.

Sarephta, Anna wife of Tobit — if Tobit's dog counts as a character) to fifteen (the Mother of the Maccabees). The Worthy Women ride horses, donkeys, and the odd camel; their attendants, even kings, march on foot. Each group is focused on a particular defining incident in their histories, but they are not in the same mode as the waggons, which present a carefully posed, iconographically traditional scene. Apart from the natural loosening of the static pictorial quality of a group caused by processing on foot, in some instances the traditional iconography is subverted in order to give prominence to the heroine: so the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham (both are on foot) is made subsidiary to the figure of his mother Sarah (who is mounted).

Boonen's *History* provides not only a lively illustration of each of the cortèges, but also a detailed commentary on each. This is peculiar to the Worthy Women: the only other part of the manuscript which has such a lengthy verbal accompaniment is the parade of the Shooters' Guilds, whose history and competition achievements are listed. This commentary is in prose, and in Dutch, apart from the biblical quotations, which are in Latin. It appears to date from at least 1505, when it was recorded in a now missing manuscript called the *Halboek*, apparently because it was kept in the *Halle au blé* (Corn Hall) where the waggons were stored when they were not in use.<sup>6</sup> Confirmation of this can be found in the Grocers' account books, starting 1541, some fifty-three years before Boonen's *History*, who copy exactly the same description of their heroine, Axa daughter of Caleb, and attribute it to the *Halboek*.<sup>7</sup>

Could it have been a copy, or perhaps a translation, of the original deviser's script? Boonen introduces this section of his manuscript: 'Hier naer volghen de xxxiiij historien vande weerdighe vrouwen, in ordonnantie gelyk sy inde Processie gaen / met bediedenis vande selue / ende wie die behoort vuijt te Stellen' (Hereupon follow the thirty-four histories of the Worthy Women, in order as they go in the procession, with an exposition of the same, and how it is fitting

<sup>6</sup> Van Even, *L'Omgang de Louvain*, p. 56. In 1505 the City Council made a payment for a book to be made 'van de figueren die geordineert syn te gane in de Processie van onser Liever Vrouwe tot Loven Carmesse in septembri' (of the figures which are arranged to go in the procession of Our Lady in Leuven's Kermesse in September). It seems possible, anticipating my later argument, that the use of the word *figueren* means this was not, as Van Even thinks, a description of the entire *ommegang*, but merely one of the Worthy Women: *figueren* could have a technical typological meaning.

<sup>7</sup> Stadsarchief Leuven [SAL], 1127 (Grocers' accounts 1541–1617), fol. 3<sup>r</sup> (loose): *Druytselsel vande processie van d[ilacuna] vettewariers, vuijten halboeck gescreuen*. The material is repeated, slightly abridged, on fol. 5<sup>r</sup>.

to present them).<sup>8</sup> It might have been the original title of the *Halboek*. The style sounds prescriptive:

*Sara die dochter van Raguel.* Dese sal sitten als een bruijt wel vechiert // hebbende twee borsen met ghelt in haer handen / Ende voer haer sullen komen oft gaen ij als pelgerijms oft wandelaers // ende die een sal hebben vliegelen gelijk een ingele ende in sijn hant eenen visch.<sup>9</sup>

[*Sara, the daughter of Raguel.* This one is to sit well arrayed like a bride, having two purses with gold in her hands. And in front of her are to come or go two like pilgrims or travellers, and one of them shall have wings like an angel, and in his hand a fish.]

In England such a document would be known as a *device*, ‘a particular kind of document, one which serves as the means by which the inventions of a “deviser” are communicated to the artisans who will execute the device described therein’.<sup>10</sup> These were often presented in a highly literary fashion and could be ‘published’ after the event as a form of commemoration, as well as serving as an instruction beforehand.

It is impossible to tell when the Worthy Women first appeared in the *ommegang*. They were the concern of the *ambachten*, who organized themselves separately from the rest of the procession, and information about them appears in the guild accounts. The main procession was organized by the City, and thus appears in the City accounts. Here we have the same problem as in Britain, that while civic documents are usually in a good state of preservation, surviving guild accounts tend not to start until the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, if then. In Leuven, the Grocers’ accounts (starting 1541) are by far the earliest. The Worthy Women *may* have begun as a random selection, perhaps marching with the participating guilds themselves at the beginning of the procession, as the Arquebusiers’ Guild was accompanied by their patron saint St Christopher,<sup>11</sup> but at some time they were rationalized and separated out into their own section of the procession.

A pamphlet published in 1646 says that this happened in the year 1490, when they were ‘Geordonneert [. . .] door den Hooghgeleerden Heere Gillis Fabri,

<sup>8</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 420<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 449<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Gordon Kipling, ‘Lydgate: The Poet as Deviser’, in *Chaucer and the Challenges of Medievalism: Studies in Honour of H. A. Kelly*, ed. by Donka Minkova and Theresa Tinkle (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 73–101 (p. 76).

<sup>11</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 482<sup>r</sup>. The Shooters’ Guilds were also accompanied, apparently traditionally, as it also happened in Brussels, by small girls as mascots. Is this a possible parallel?

doctor in de H. Godts geleerheyt' (arranged [. . .] by the learned Mr Gillis Fabri, Doctor of Theology).<sup>12</sup> *M. Gielis de Smet*, described as *terminaris* (Prior) *vande Vrouwenbruers*, the Carmelites, was recorded as Doctor in the University Faculty of Theology in 1479.<sup>13</sup> I have not yet found any relevant record for 1490, but in 1512/13 *de terminarijs* was paid 18 *solidi* (*schellingen*) 'van alle die vrouwen genomen vter byble Die Inde processie tot loeuen carmesse Rijden In behoorlijcher ordinar. te stellen' (to arrange all the Women taken from the Bible who ride in Leuven's *kermesse*<sup>14</sup> in appropriate order).<sup>15</sup> According to Van Even this cannot have been De Smet, as he died in 1506;<sup>16</sup> it looks as if the position had become hereditary to the Order. By this time the *terminaris* might purely be marshalling them, but he probably still kept a critical eye on the preparations and costuming. The Carmelites, 'Brothers of Our Lady', were an appropriate order to call on for a deviser for a Marian procession, and this might explain why Elijah (the claimed founder of the Order), Elisha, and 'the sons of the prophet' are all dressed in Carmelite colours, black robes with a white mantle. Like the programme of carvings on the front of Leuven Town Hall,<sup>17</sup> this is a carefully devised scholarly text, not a random assemblage of folk art. It can be assumed that the deviser had some coherent objectives in his arrangement. Can we work out what they were?

The cortège presents a historical panorama, starting chronologically in Genesis with Sarah wife of Abraham and ending with the Mother of the Maccabees, from the last book of the Vulgate Old Testament.<sup>18</sup> And naturally they come

<sup>12</sup> See Van Even, *L'Omgang de Louvain*, p. 38. An undated French pamphlet said by Van Even to be 1648 says they were *Inventée et ordonnée en l'an 1490 par les très-saige GISLENUS FABRI, Docteur en la S. Théologie*: *ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>13</sup> *M. Gielis de Smet, terminaris vande Vrouwenbruers, doctor 1479*: Boonen, *Geschiedenis van Leuven*, p. 237.

<sup>14</sup> *Kermesse* is usually used of a fair. In Leuven the procession was linked to an ancient chartered fair, celebrated as a tourist attraction and fund-raiser as well as a commercial event, and the records sometimes refer to the *ommegang* as the *kermesse*.

<sup>15</sup> SAL 5136 (1512/13), fol. 296.

<sup>16</sup> Van Even, *L'Omgang de Louvain*, p. 15, n. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Bert Cardon, 'Een Gevel voor het Stadhuis de Representatie en Legitimatie van de Stedelijke Macht', in *Een Leuvense Bijbel in Steen*, ed. by Maria Gillier, Gilbert Huybens, and Paul Reekmans, special issue, *Jaarboek van de Geschied- en Oudheidkundige Kring voor Leuven en Omgeving*, 37 (1998), 1–7. See below.

<sup>18</sup> The Authorized Version of the Bible in England and the subsequent versions do not include what are known as the Old Testament Apocrypha: they are however part of the Old Tes-

very near the beginning of the procession, to act as a kind of prolegomena to its real substance, which by the early 1500s had been relentlessly pruned to the waggons showing the Seven Joys of the Virgin: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Epiphany, the Resurrection (Christ appearing to his Mother), Pentecost, and the Assumption-and-Coronation; plus four others: the Fall of Man, the Tree of Jesse, the Presentation in the Temple (apocryphal), and the Nine Orders of Angels. All of these fit into the basic Marian pattern in different ways; we shall glance at them later. This part of the procession, the waggons, is the one which in England turned into the Cycles of Mystery Plays. This does not happen in Leuven (or generally in the southern Low Countries), because there the day's festivities culminated in a stage-play, on a different theme every year, in the *kerkhof*, the churchyard, outside Sint-Pieterskerk.

There is nothing unusual about a fairly hefty Old Testament component in a religious procession. Christianity accepts the Judaic concept that God works his purpose out through history, save that for the Christian this purpose culminates in the Redemption of humankind through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

A sequence of figures from the Old Testament would naturally invite a chronological arrangement. In literary terms it would be a living Bible Picture Book. For the spectator, the effect is of history passing before your eyes. It gives a sense of process, but not necessarily of progress, unless it is one of increasing anticipation, the growing light at the end of the tunnel: in theatrical terms, the approach of the real *pièce de resistance* at the heart of the procession, the great waggons. Processions like this work cumulatively, encompassing us with a great cloud of witnesses.

Each Old Testament heroine was sponsored by one of the trade guilds: they were known collectively as the *ambachtsvrouwen* (guilds' women). Where possible each *vrouw* seems to have been matched thematically to her particular trade,<sup>19</sup>

tament in the Vulgate version familiar to the late fifteenth-century devisers of this programme. This division stemmed from the fact that they were included in the Septuagint (Greek) Old Testament, but not in the Hebrew canon. This led to their rejection by the Reformation. (This is a very sweeping account of the situation; the real one is much more complex.)

<sup>19</sup> In the Brussels *ommegang*, the *ambachten* carried processional torches surmounted by emblems of their trade. Some of these were biblical figures: so the *Fruitverkopers* (Fruit-sellers) carried Adam and Eve and the Tree of Knowledge, and the *Bontwerkers* (Skinners/Furriers) St John the Baptist, who was clad in a camel's skin: Edgard Goedleven, *De Grote Markt van Brussel* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1993), pp. 83–91.





Figure 7. The Coopers: Wife of Abdias the Prophet. *Liber Boonen*, fol. 446<sup>r</sup>.

just as in the York Mystery Plays the Shipwrights were given the Building of the Ark, and the Bakers the Last Supper. So Ruth,<sup>20</sup> who gleaned in Boaz's field and tricked him into marrying her, belonged to the *Stroodeckers* (Thatchers), and the *Cuypers* (Coopers — barrel makers) fielded the Wife of Abdias who was told by the Prophet Elijah 'Go, borrow of all thy neighbours empty vessels not a few'<sup>21</sup> to contain all the oil he was about to multiply for her: the multiplication stopped when she ran out of vessels. The message appears to be: should an Old Testament prophet turn up on your doorstep threatening to perform a miracle, do not panic, the Leuven Coopers can supply you on very easy terms (Fig. 7).

The *Wijntaverniers* (Vintners — wine merchants) had the daughter of King Astyages,<sup>22</sup> a non-biblical figure, though from Old Testament times. According

<sup>20</sup> Ruth 2. 1–23; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 437<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> IV Kings 4. 3; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 446<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Called in the manuscript and the accounts *Astrages*: an obvious misreading of *y* as long *r*. *Liber Boonen*, fol. 448<sup>r</sup>.

to Peter Comestor,<sup>23</sup> her father dreamed that a vine grew out of her genitals and overshadowed the world: she gave birth to the Persian king of Babylon, Cyrus the Great, who ended the Jewish captivity. And, rather alarmingly, the *Barbiers* (Barber Surgeons) had Sephora (Zipporah), one of the wives of Moses, ‘heb-bende voer haer op een cussen liggende een Ionck kint naeck // dwelck sij met een schere oft steen besnijden sal’ (carrying in her lap on a cushion a naked child whom she is circumcising with a sharp stone).<sup>24</sup> This is an extremely complicated and possibly aetiological episode in the prehistory of circumcision with which the commentators had and still have trouble. The fact that she was an early *female* surgeon need not cause us trouble: interestingly, in York, the guild ordinances of the Barber Surgeons say that ‘no man *or woman* is to occupy in the art of surgery or of tooth pulling nor in any other thing belonging to the art of barber-surgeons’ without apprenticing him- or herself to a master.<sup>25</sup>

So each of these guilds authenticates itself by displaying its fifteen minutes of biblical fame: the moment at which it could be claimed that their special skills played a part in the process of salvation. Each also affirms its relationship with and loyalty to the patroness of the city and procession by mounting their heroine in her honour.

However, only about one third of the heroines are obvious choices for their guild; others appear to be arbitrary. Why, for example, was Hannah the mother of Samuel<sup>26</sup> given to the *Oudecleercoopers* (Second-hand Clothes Dealers),<sup>27</sup> Anna mother of Tobias to the *Gelaesmaeckers* (Glaziers),<sup>28</sup> or Abishag the Shunamite

<sup>23</sup> Peter Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, PL 198 (1855), col. 1470: on Daniel, cap. 16, *De Cyro*.

<sup>24</sup> Exodus 2. 21; 4. 24–26; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 429<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> *York Memorandum Book*, ed. by Maud Sellers, 2 vols, Surtees Society, 120 and 125 (Durham: Surtees Society, 1912–14), I (1912), 209.

<sup>26</sup> I Kings 1. 1–28; I Kings 2. 1–21. I refer to the Douai/Rheims translation of the Bible, which is based on the Vulgate, and therefore closer to the Bible as the devisers of the *ommegang* would have known it. The Authorized Version’s I Samuel and II Samuel are the Vulgate’s I Kings and II Kings, while the Authorized Version’s I Kings and II Kings are the Vulgate’s III Kings and IV Kings.

<sup>27</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 438<sup>r</sup>. It has been suggested to me that this was because ‘his mother made him a little coat, which she brought to him on the appointed days, when she went up with her husband, to offer the solemn sacrifice’ (I Kings 2. 19), and must therefore presumably have taken away the outgrown one. I have not yet found a confirmatory reference to this in the commentaries.

<sup>28</sup> Tobit 10. 4–5. Inconsistently, I refer to the book called in the Vulgate ‘Tobias’ as Tobit, as in the Authorized Version of the Apocrypha, and distinguish for clarity between Tobit the father and Tobias the son. *Liber Boonen*, fol. 451<sup>r</sup>.

to the *Metzers* (Masons)?<sup>29</sup> There must have been some additional rationale behind their selection. And why are they all women?

The most likely clue lies in the perceived relationship of the Old Testament to the New which I mentioned above.

Lex est umbra futurorum,  
Christus finis promissorum  
qui consummat omnia.<sup>30</sup>

[The Law is the shadow of things to come;  
Christ is the final end of all promises,  
Who fulfils all things.]

From this comes the structuring concept of biblical typology: the idea that all the events in the New Testament were, as it were, previewed in the Old Testament. Typology is one stage on from prophecy. The characters in these incidents do not speak but do, sometimes merely are. They are types and figures of what is to come. They themselves do not realize what they represent. They communicate ‘per speculum in aenigmate’<sup>31</sup> (in a glass, even in a dark speaking). We look into their mirror and with hindsight read what they reflect. But, it is important to emphasize, they still exist(ed) in their own right.

This makes them very suitable for processions. They are colourful, varied, yet contribute to the thematic unity of the procession; this works particularly well when the culmination of the procession (the Host, the patron saint, the relic) comes at the end. This happens today in the Valencia Corpus Christi procession (where they prefigure the Eucharist), and in the revival of the Bruges Holy Blood. In the Leuven *ommegang*, the focus of the procession is the statue of Our Lady *Sedes Sapientie*. She is embedded centrally in the last segment of the procession, escorted by the clergy who precede her, and by the University, the Shooters’ Guilds, and the civic administration, who follow her. Everything in the procession honours and authorizes her in some way, however tangential it may at first seem.

A 1681 advertisement describes the Leuven *ommegang* as ‘une procession laquelle fut embellie de l’an 1490 par la représentation des Femmes du Vieil

<sup>29</sup> III Kings 1. 3–4, 15. *Liber Boonen*, fol. 444’.

<sup>30</sup> Adam of St Victor (mid-twelfth century) Easter Sequence *Zyma vetus expurgetur* 19–21; see *The Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse*, ed. by F. J. Raby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 235.

<sup>31</sup> I Corinthians 13. 12.

Testament, figurant et signifiant la sainte Vierge Marie' (a procession, which was further beautified from the year 1490 by the representation of the Women of the Old Testament, figuring and signifying the Blessed Virgin Mary),<sup>32</sup> which confirms that, even at that late stage, the major organizing principle behind the selection of Worthy Women was perceived to be typology. The word *figure* used here is a technical term meaning 'to prefigure'. It may be significant that each section in Boonen's description is headed *Die Ierste Figure* (Sara), *Die Tweede Figure* (Rebecca), and so on.

This would fit very well with what we know of the programmes drawn up by the academic consultants for other major civic works in the second part of the fifteenth century in Leuven. Typology was in scholarly fashion. I have already mentioned the 1448 programme for the sculptures which decorate the façade of the Town Hall, commissioned by the city from Jacob Schellewaerts, Doctor of Theology, and Jan van der Phalisen, pastor of Sint-Pieterskerk. The theme is the concordance of the Old and New Law (expressed typologically), with a special emphasis on Justice and the punishment of wrongdoing.<sup>33</sup> Like the *ommegang*, it takes the principle of typology and extends the range of examples to fit its specific theme. Lesser schemes inside the building also drew on typology.<sup>34</sup> Another striking example is the *Last Supper* by Dirk Bouts in Sint-Pieterskerk, commissioned by the Fraternity of the Holy Sacrament in 1464. The contract specified that Bouts should take advice on the subject matter from two professors of Theology in the University.<sup>35</sup> Sure enough, the central panel is flanked by four typological scenes from the Old Testament.

For artists or devisers looking for textbooks on the subject, there were two major late medieval works which attempted to systematize and illustrate this web of typology.<sup>36</sup> Modern readers are most familiar with the *Biblia Pauperum*, which

<sup>32</sup> *Announce de la Kermesse de Louvain de 1681*, published by Van Even in *L'Omgang de Louvain*, p. 60.

<sup>33</sup> See above note 17.

<sup>34</sup> See below note 38.

<sup>35</sup> Maurits Smeyers, 'Het Levende Brood: Dirk Bouts en het Laatste Avondmaal', in *Leuven in de Late Middeleeuwen: Dirk Bouts, Het Laatste Avondmaal*, ed. by Anna Bergmans (Tiel: Lannoo, 1998), pp. 133–75 (pp. 136–38).

<sup>36</sup> Another extensive typological compendium was the twelfth-century *Pictor in carmine*, which seems to have been a favourite in England before the other two appeared in printed versions. For a recent account, see Meg Twycross, 'Kissing Cousins: The Four Daughters of God and the Visitation in the N. Town Play', *Medieval English Theatre*, 18 (1996), 99–141. It seems however unlikely to have been a source for the Leuven deviser.

after a considerable manuscript history became one of the earliest blockbooks.<sup>37</sup> Its page layout presents each New Testament event in the Life of Christ flanked by two Old Testament prefigurations or *antitypes*, with a brief Latin explanation of each parallel, a mnemonic verse each, and four associated prophecies. It acted as a pattern book for carvers and stained-glass-window makers almost from the moment of its printing *c.* 1460, for example for the 1467/8 roof-bosses by Joes Beyaert in Leuven Town Hall's *kleine gotische zaal* (where Boonen would have seen them, over a century later, every working day).<sup>38</sup>

The Leuven procession, however, honours the Blessed Virgin rather than Christ, and the evidence suggests that the organizers used the other favourite illustrated compendium, the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* (*Mirror of Man's Salvation*), rather than the *Biblia Pauperum*.<sup>39</sup> This differs from the *Biblia Pauperum* in that it presents three Old Testament antitypes to each New Testament event (Fig. 8), and each group is accompanied by a lengthy and detailed Latin verse explication. The *Speculum* enjoyed immense popularity in the Low Countries in the fifteenth century, even before it became a printed book in *c.* 1468, both in its Latin form and in Dutch translation as *De Spieghel der menscheliker behoude- nesse*.<sup>40</sup> Its central focus is still the Life of Christ, but with an enfolding prologue and epilogue about the early and later life of the Virgin Mary, and it ends with a recapitulation of her Seven Sorrows and Seven Joys. It thus has far more female antitypes than does the *Biblia Pauperum*.

This Marian material corresponds closely to the Marian content of the Leuven *ommegang*, and it seems highly likely that its devisers used the *Speculum* as an

<sup>37</sup> *Biblia Pauperum: A Facsimile and Edition*, ed. by Avril Henry (Aldershot: Scolar, 1987).

<sup>38</sup> Maurits Smeyers, 'Het inwendig gebeeldhouwd décor van het Leuvense stadhuis', in *Arca Lovaniensis Jaarboek 1977: Het Stadhuis van Leuven* (Leuven: J. Crab for the Vrienden Stedelijke Musea – Leuven, 1977), pp. 257–91, and figs 54–62: catalogue entry 181 in *Het Leuvense Stadhuis* (Exhibition catalogue; Leuven: Peters, 1998), pp. 194–95. In 1475, Beyaert also carved a baby Jesus for the Nativity waggon in the *ommegang*; Van Even, *L'Omgang de Louvain*, p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> See *The Mirour of Mans Saluacioun: A Middle English Translation of the 'Speculum Humanae Salvationis'*, ed. by Avril Henry (Aldershot: Scolar, 1986), hereafter called *Mirour*. For Latin text, see J. Lutz and P. Perdrizet, *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, 2 vols (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1907–09), hereafter called *Speculum*.

<sup>40</sup> Bert Cardon, *Manuscripts of the 'Speculum Humanae Salvationis' in the Southern Netherlands (c.1410–c.1470)*, (Leuven: Peeters, 1996). The descriptions in the *Liber Boonen* are not copied directly from the *Speculum*, in either its Latin or Dutch versions. Whoever wrote them drew them up in his own words, using the *Speculum* as source material.



Figure 8. The Annunciation, Moses and the Burning Bush, Gideon's Fleece, Rebecca at the Well: *Miroir de l'humaine salvation*, French translation of the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*: Bruges, 1455. Glasgow University Library, MS Hunter 60, fol. 10<sup>v</sup>. By permission of Glasgow University Library, Department of Special Collections.

authenticating reference book. It may even have determined the final selection of episodes for the waggons in the early sixteenth century. Besides the Seven Joys of the Virgin, the Expulsion from Eden, Mary's Presentation in the Temple, and possibly the curious tower of the Nine Orders of Angels can all be matched in the *Speculum*, though the pattern is of course not exclusive. The Old Testament heroines are even more closely related: at least eighteen out of the thirty-four Leuven Women can be found in the *Speculum*. What clinches the matter is the presence of two ladies who do not appear in the Old Testament but feature in the *Speculum*, which got them from Peter Comestor: the daughter of Astyages, mother of Cyrus, and only remotely connected to biblical history,<sup>41</sup> and Tharbis,

<sup>41</sup> See note 23.

the Sabaean wife of Moses, here interpreted as an Ethiopian, to whom he gave a ring of forgetfulness so that she would return to her own country.<sup>42</sup>

The deviser of this segment of the *ommegang* seems to have recycled most of the female antitypes from the *Speculum*, omitting only those who present an overly negative picture, like Jephtha's daughter. As one might expect, they cluster largely round the Life of Mary, both apocryphal and biblical. So the initially chaste marriage of Sara and Tobias prefigures her chaste marriage with Joseph;<sup>43</sup> for the Annunciation there is Rebecca at the well,<sup>44</sup> which replicates the pattern of a messenger proclaiming to a virgin that she is his master's chosen bride. The water of the well drawn by Rebecca is equated in the *Speculum* with the Water of Life offered to angels and mankind by Mary.<sup>45</sup> Mary's Sorrow at the Crucifixion and her lamentation over the body of Christ is prefigured by Naomi lamenting the death of her sons: 'Call me not Noemi (that is, beautiful), call me Marah (that is, bitter): for the Almighty hath quite filled me with bitterness.'<sup>46</sup> The filling of the cruse of the Widow of Abdias the prophet (she of the empty barrels) is in the *Speculum* a type of Pentecost.<sup>47</sup> The apocryphal Joy of the Assumption and Coronation is paralleled by the Old Testament queens Hester (queen consort) and Bathsheba (queen mother) reflecting the dual role of Mary as Mother and Spouse of Christ.<sup>48</sup>

However, the central focus of some of the parallels has shifted; the episode which appears in the procession is not always the one we might have expected.

<sup>42</sup> Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, col. 1144: on Exodus, cap. 6, *De uxore Moysi Æthiopissa*. The daughter of Astyages also appears in Jacob van Maerlant, *Spiegel historiel*, ed. by M. de Vries and E. Verwijs, 3 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1880), I Partie, III Boek, lines 1–55.

<sup>43</sup> Tobit 6. 18–22, 8. 4–10; *Speculum*, 6. 51–66; *Mirour*, lines 857–64. *Liber Boonen*, fol. 449<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 422<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> *Speculum*, 7. 98.

<sup>46</sup> Ruth 1. 20; *Speculum*, 26. 67–71; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 436<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> IV Kings 4. 3; *Speculum*, 34. 89–98; *Mirour*, lines 3693–98; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 446<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> Hester: Esther 2. 17, 5. 1–8, 7. 1–7; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 435<sup>r</sup>. Bathsheba: III Kings 2. 19, *Liber Boonen*, fol. 443<sup>r</sup>. The *Speculum* treats the Assumption and its antitypes twice, once in the body of the text, and once in an appendix on the Sorrows and Joys of the Virgin. Hester, Bathsheba, and Abigail are all cited in the section on the *Joys* as types of the Assumption and Coronation: *Joys*, lines 191–98; *Mirour*, lines 5111–18. Bathsheba in the body of the *Speculum* as a figure of the Assumption: *Speculum*, 36. 89–96; *Mirour*, lines 5117–18; Hester as intercessor: *Speculum*, 39. 83–90; *Mirour*, lines 4187–94. These two also appear as figures of the Assumption in the *Biblia Pauperum*, pp. 117, 199.

For example, in the *Speculum* (and the *Biblia Pauperum*) the dedication by Hannah of the infant Samuel is an anticipation of the Presentation of the infant Christ in the Temple. In the *ommegang* the focus of the story is switched to his miraculous birth to a barren mother, prefiguring the Immaculate Conception,<sup>49</sup> and more remotely, Mary's Virginal Conception of Christ. The reasons for this are probably various. Practically speaking, the deviser, needing over thirty women to distribute among the guilds,<sup>50</sup> could not confine himself exclusively to just one source; he needed to acquire antitypes from wherever he could find them. A woman who turns up in the *Speculum* in one guise may turn up in different and more thematically suitable company in another work. This seems to have happened here. The *ommegang* is linked with the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin, 8 September. The *Speculum* antitype for the Conception of Mary (more precisely the Annunciation to Joachim) was the daughter of King Astyages, she of the vine, who duly appears in the *ommegang*.<sup>51</sup> But in his sermon for the Nativity of the Virgin in the *Legenda Aurea*, Jacobus de Voragine produces four more barren mothers who miraculously gave birth to wonder children: Sarah,<sup>52</sup> Rachel,<sup>53</sup> the Mother of Samson,<sup>54</sup> and Hannah the mother of Samuel.<sup>55</sup> They are cited by the angel in the Annunciation to Joachim:

Peccati quippe, non naturae ultor est deus et ideo, cum alicujus uterum claudit, ad hoc facit, ut mirabilis denuo aperit, et non libidinis esse, quod nascitur, sed divini fore muneris cognoscatur. Prima gentis vestrae mater Sara nonne usque ad nonagesimum annum sterilitatis opprobrium pertulit et tamen Ysaac, cui repromissa erat omnium gentium benedictio, generavit? Rachel etiam nonne diu sterilis fuit et tamen Josephum genuit, qui totius Aegypti dominium habuit? Quis fortior Samsone vel sanctior

<sup>49</sup> Though this did not become dogma until 1854, the idea had been introduced into Western Christianity very early, and in 1439 the Council of Basle approved it as a 'pious opinion'; in 1476 Sixtus V established the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (8 December).

<sup>50</sup> I say this cautiously, as we do not know how many guilds needed a heroine at the time of devising.

<sup>51</sup> *Speculum*, 3. 51–56; *Mirour*, lines 545–60; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 448<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> Genesis 16. 1–16, 17. 15–21, 18. 9–15, 21. 1–21; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 421<sup>r</sup>. She is not in the *Speculum*, though Abraham and Isaac are, as types of Christ carrying the Cross: *Speculum*, 32. 45–58; *Mirour*, lines 24458–62.

<sup>53</sup> Genesis 30. 22–24; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 424<sup>r</sup>. She only appears in the *Speculum* as one of those (Judith, Susanna, Rebecca, Sarah, Rachel) whose beauty will be exceeded by the beauty of the inhabitants of heaven: *Speculum*, 42. 56; *Mirour*, line 4460.

<sup>54</sup> Judges 13. 2–24; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 435<sup>r</sup>. She does not appear in the *Speculum*.

<sup>55</sup> 1 Kings 1. 1–28, 2. 1–21; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 438<sup>r</sup>.



Samuele? Et tamen hi ambo matres steriles habuere. Rationi igitur et exemplis crede, dilatos diu conceptus et steriles partus mirabiliores esse solere. Proinde Anna uxor tua pariet tibi filiam et vocabis nomen ejus Mariam.<sup>56</sup>

[God punishes not nature but sin, and therefore, when he closes a woman's womb, he does this in order to open it miraculously later on, and make it known that what is born is not the fruit of carnal desire, but of the divine generosity. Did not the first mother of your race suffer the shame of childlessness until she was ninety years old, and yet bore Isaac, to whom was promised the blessing of all nations? Was not Rachel barren for a long time, and yet bore Joseph who had power over all Egypt? Who was stronger than Samson or holier than Samuel? Yet they both had sterile mothers. Believe these reasons and examples, which show that delayed conceptions and infertile child-bearing are usually all the more wonderful. So then, your wife will bear you a daughter and you will call her Mary.]<sup>57</sup>

All four women appear in the procession, all in contexts that focus upon their eventual childbearing and, in three cases, the harem jealousies which made their situations peculiarly stressful.

This suggests yet another, parallel, principle of selection: the first of the waggons to follow the Women is the Tree of Jesse, an Old Testament prophecy (and in the *Speculum* an antitype of the Birth of the Virgin),<sup>58</sup> but in art a schematic representation of the first chapter of the New Testament, St Matthew's genealogy of Christ.<sup>59</sup> The *Speculum* identifies the 'rod out of the root of Jesse' explicitly with Mary's line of descent. Some of the women who are not immediately obvious typological reflections of Mary are in fact crucial ancestresses, celebrated and sometimes specifically named (in an otherwise male genealogy) by Matthew: Leah (not Rachel), mother of Judah;<sup>60</sup> Tamar who unwillingly played the harlot and who was the mother of Phares by Judah;<sup>61</sup> Rahab the

<sup>56</sup> Jacobus a Voragine, *Legenda Aurea: vulgo historia lombardica dicta*, ed. by Johan Georg Theodor Graesse (Leipzig: Arnold, 1846), p. 588.

<sup>57</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), II, 152.

<sup>58</sup> Isaiah II. 1-2; *Speculum*, 4. 3-7; *Mirour*, lines 607-78; *Liber Boonen*, fols 455<sup>v</sup>-456<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> Jacobus de Voragine's sermon on the Nativity of the Virgin also begins with genealogies, of Joseph and of the Virgin Mary. The difficulty that the genealogy in Matthew is that of Joseph and not of Mary was met by constructing one for her in which she also descended from David, and from a daughter of Solomon.

<sup>60</sup> Matthew 1. 2, Genesis 29. 35; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 423<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> Matthew 1. 3, Genesis 38. 29; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 425<sup>r</sup>.

harlot, mother of Boaz by Salmon.<sup>62</sup> There follow Ruth, mother of Obed by Boaz,<sup>63</sup> and Bathsheba, mother of Solomon.<sup>64</sup>

This raises the question of how many of the *ambachtsvrouwen* are typological in the full sense of the word, rather than in the much more general sense of being forerunners of the Virgin. Some, as we have just seen, seem to be there because they are ancestors; some seem to have no more qualification than that they are distinguished females, and thus add lustre to the procession. Some are there, one suspects, largely for theatrical reasons, because they provide an opportunity for exotic costume — Assenes and her attendants are dressed as Egyptians,<sup>65</sup> Tharbis and hers as Moors<sup>66</sup> — or sheer variety: after a sequence of silent cortèges, the prophetess Miriam, sister of Moses, leads a group of women in Jewish costumes striking timbrels and singing.<sup>67</sup>

The written descriptions do not help us. Partly because of their limited objectives, to describe the scenario in terms of costume, gesture, and the names of the characters, and to refer the reader to the relevant chapter of Scripture for further information, they do not even mention the typology. We are left to infer its presence. But then the same is true of the façade of Leuven Town Hall, and even of Bouts's *Last Supper*.

<sup>62</sup> Joshua 2. 1–21, 6. 17, 22–25, 35; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 430<sup>r</sup>. The commentary specifically says that she is 'the wife of Salmon', not *Solomon* as Van Even surmises: Ruth 4. 21; Matthew 1. 4, 5; Luke 3. 32.

<sup>63</sup> Matthew 1. 5, Ruth 4. 17, 21; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 437<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> Matthew 1. 6, II Kings 11. 27, III Kings 2; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 443<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 426<sup>r</sup>: 'Assenes Die huijsvrouw van Ioseph sal sitten als eene groote Iouffrowe // nae die Egiptinaers maniere // costelijk verchiert [. . .] Achter dese moeghen comen iij. oft iiij dienst vrouwen in egiptenerschen habijte' (Assenes, the wife of Joseph, shall sit like an imposing young woman, expensively dressed in the Egyptian fashion [. . .] Behind these must come three or four serving-women in Egyptian dress). The costume in Boonen's drawing appears to be taken from Joannes Sluperius, *Omnium fere gentium nostrae aetatis nationum habitus et effigies. In eosdem J. Sluperii [. . .] Epigrammata; adjecta ad singulos icones gallica tetrasticha* (Antwerp, 1572), BL Shelfmark: 810.c.1.

<sup>66</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 428<sup>r</sup>: 'als een moorinne swert gemaect' (like a Moorish woman, blacked up).

<sup>67</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 427<sup>r</sup>: 'achter haer sullen comen veel vrouwen met Iuetschen habijte // als pelgerinnen hebbende oock elck een Tamborijne ende een stocxken als vore van Maria geseijt es // en sullen desen seluen sanck naer singen // ende slaen op die tamborijne / als Maria vuijt heeft' (behind her shall come many women in Jewish costume, like pilgrims, each one also having a tabor and a baton, as has been said above concerning Maria, and they shall sing this same song, and strike the tambourine, every time Maria has finished).

In fact both the former are much more difficult texts, typologically, than the *ommegang*. Typology proper links events and figures in the Old Testament to events and figures in the New, usually because they have some added symbolic resonance over and above the mere narrative pattern. For example, the two types of the Incarnation, Gideon's fleece which was moist with dew while the ground around was dry or the Burning Bush which Moses saw aflame but not consumed, both depend on a metaphorical reading to make their point.<sup>68</sup> But there are very few really complex images in the antitypes which involve women, and in the procession there are only a handful. In the *Speculum* the Widow's cruse is a type of Pentecost: she stands for Holy Church, widowed of her Lord, and the oil is the grace of the Holy Spirit which is multiplied as long as there is a vessel to receive it.<sup>69</sup> Mary was considered to have been present at Pentecost, which is one of the Seven Joys, so to that extent the Widow of Abdias is appropriate to the *ommegang*; but it is not an easy identification to make unless you know about it. The most obvious visual connection would be between the Coopers and their barrels. The Widow of Sarephtha<sup>70</sup> carries 'twee houten liggende inde maniere van eenen cruijce' (two sticks lying in the shape of a cross); in the *Biblia Pauperum* she is, with Isaac, a type of Christ carrying the Cross.<sup>71</sup> One suspects, however, that she was chosen because she suited the guild of *Timmerleiden* (Carpenters), rather than for any specific relevance to the Virgin Mary.

On the whole, however, most of the antitypes of Mary are fairly straightforward narrative parallels: a woman is told by an angel that she shall conceive and bear a son (the Mother of Samson), a mother laments the death of her child (Naomi), a woman's son is raised from the dead (the Shunamite), a queen is summoned by a king to share his throne (Hester, Bathsheba). There is nothing particularly arcane about the New Testament events to which these refer.

The bulk of the antitypes in the *Speculum*, moreover, are not even related to New Testament events, but to the Virgin's anagogical, a-historical roles as our Intercessor and Defender: Abigail, the Woman of Thecua, the Woman of Abela, Tharbis, the Woman of Thebes, Michal, Hester with Ahasuerus — 'Loquere regi pro nobis et libera nos a morte' (Speak to the king for us and deliver us from

<sup>68</sup> *Biblia Pauperum*, pp. 48–51; *Speculum*, 7. 55–86.

<sup>69</sup> IV Kings 4. 1–7; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 446<sup>r</sup>; *Speculum*, 34. 89–98; *Mirour*, lines 3693–98.

<sup>70</sup> III Kings 17. 8–24; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 445<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> *Biblia Pauperum*, pp. 93, 95.

death).<sup>72</sup> In order to make the typological link, the audience merely needs to identify the Old Testament character and the incident.

This assumes that they are biblically fairly well educated, or that they have acquired a patriotic local knowledge of the procession and its content. The devisers stimulated recognition by costume, gesture, and attributes. These last are designed to identify, but also to intrigue and even shock. Ingeniously, the spectators are enticed into a mode of interactive reading by being set puzzles. (It is a truism that the more striking, incongruous, and enigmatic the attributes are, the better they act as memory images.) Who is the mounted woman in academic robes with a palm-tree fixed to the back of her saddle, leading the cortège of *t'Groot Ambacht* (the Great Guild, a confederation of lesser guilds: Fig. 9)? Deborah, Judge of Israel, 'want sij onder den boom van palmen te recht sat' (because she sat at judgement under the palm tree).<sup>73</sup> Who is the *ambachtsvrouw* of the *Bontwerckers* (Skinners/Furriers) who is carrying *eenen gevulden man* (a stuffed man) in her lap (Fig. 10)?<sup>74</sup> This is Michal who 'let David down through a window; and he went, and fled, and escaped. And Michal took an image, and put it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth'.<sup>75</sup> And who is the woman carrying a severed head in her hand? (See below.)

These attributes prompt the audience to remember the relevant narrative. They may have been given a much simpler aid to recognizing the person. In Boonen's illustrations, many of the characters are identified by captions, merely their names written in above the figures. In processions and Royal Entries, the devisers sometimes made quite sure of their audience's understanding by reinforcing their visual presentation with the written word, *scriptures* written on placards or banderoles.<sup>76</sup> The text accompanying the Leuven Women suggests that they also had recourse to this reinforcing method. Often they are merely name-tags:

Ende voer haer [Sara daughter of Raguel] sullen komen oft gaen ij als pelgerijms oft wandelaers // ende die een sal hebben vluogelen gelijk een ingele ende in sijn hant eenen visch // ende voer sijn hooft desen rol *Raphael angelus* Raphael dinge // ende

<sup>72</sup> Esther 4. 8; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 453<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> Judges 4. 5; 'van achter ouer den sadele ouer haer hooft sal comen eenen pallemboom': *Liber Boonen*, fol. 432<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 439<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> 1 Kings 19. 12–13.

<sup>76</sup> Gordon Kipling, 'The London Pageants for Margaret of Anjou', *Medieval English Theatre*, 4.1 (1982) 5–27 (p. 6).



Figure 9. T'Groot Ambacht: Deborah under the palm tree.

*Liber Boonen, fol. 432<sup>r</sup>.*

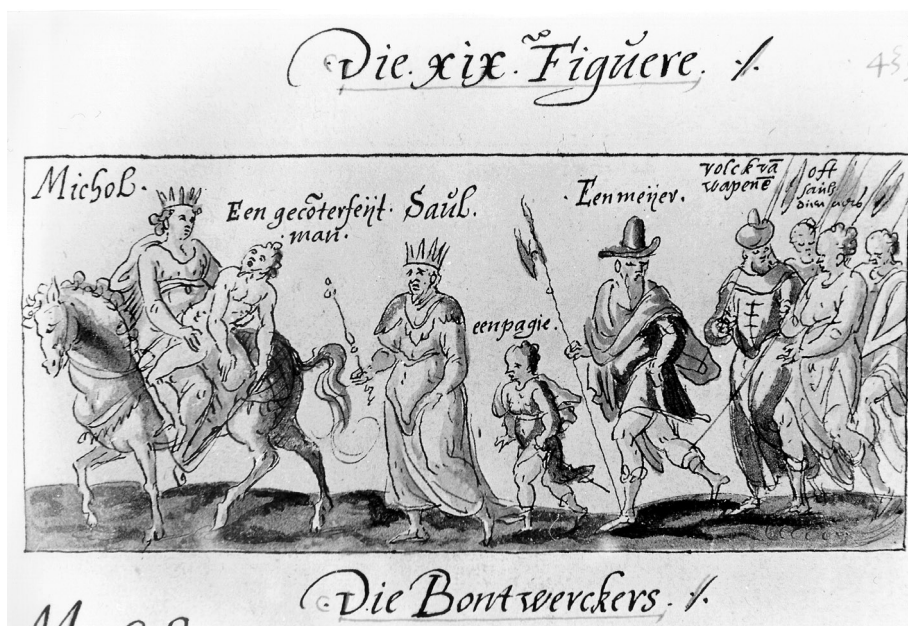


Figure 10. The Furriers: Michal and the dummy man. *Liber Boonen, fol. 439<sup>r</sup>.*

die ande[re] desen rol *Tobias Iunior* thobias die ioncxste / leijdende eenen hont achter hem.<sup>77</sup>

[And in front of her shall come or go two like pilgrims or travellers, and one of them shall have wings like an angel, and in his hand a fish, and on his forehead<sup>78</sup> this roll: *Raphael angelus*, the angel Raphael. And the other this roll: *Thobias junior*, the younger Tobias, leading a dog after him.]

This might suggest that Boonen's captions are merely economical versions of these 'rolls'. But it goes further than this. According to the descriptions, they appear to have used more lengthy banderoles to conduct conversations:<sup>79</sup>

Ende achter haer [Thamar] sal comen een schepere met eenen hamele op sijnen hals // hebbende voer sijn hoofd gescreuen *Pastor Judah*<sup>80</sup> die schaepherder van Iudas // Ende eenen rolle in sijn hant *Vbi est mulier que sedebat in biuio*<sup>81</sup> // Waer is die vrouwe die sat opden cruijswech // Achter oft bij desen herdere sullen gaen v. oft vj. dorplieden mans ende vrouwen // ende sullen hebben dezen rolle *Non fuit in loco isto meretrix*<sup>82</sup> // Op dese plaetse en heeft gheen ledighe vrouwe geweest.<sup>83</sup>

[And behind her shall come a shepherd, with a wether round his shoulders, having written above his forehead: *Pastor Jude*, Shepherd of Judah. And a roll in his hand: *Vbi est mulier que sedebat in biuio*, 'Where is the woman that sat in the cross way?' Behind or beside this shepherd shall go five or six village people, men and women, and shall have this roll: *Non fuit in loco isto meretrix*, 'There was no harlot in this place.']

Voer sara sal gaen een Egiptenersse geheeten *Agar* hebbende op haeren hals broot geladen ende waeter / ende in haer rechte hant desen rolle *A facie Sarai domine mee ego fugio*<sup>84</sup> // Ick vlie wecht van daensicht van mijnde vrouwen // Ende op haer rechte sijde sal gaen eenen Ingel hebbende desen rolle *Reuertere ad dominam tuam // et humiliare sub manibus illius*<sup>85</sup> / Keert Weder tot uwen vrouwen // ende verootmoedicht v onder haer handen.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>77</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 449<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> Attached to his hat? Bound round his forehead? Compare the *Pastor Jude* below.

<sup>79</sup> Compare the Angel of the Nativity in the 1615 Van Alsloot painting of *The Triumph of Isabella* (Theatre Museum, London), which carries a banner reading *Gloria in excelsis deo*.

<sup>80</sup> Genesis 38. 20.

<sup>81</sup> Genesis 38. 21.

<sup>82</sup> Genesis 38. 21.

<sup>83</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 425<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> Genesis 16. 8.

<sup>85</sup> Genesis 16. 9.

<sup>86</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 421<sup>r-v</sup>.



Figure 11a. The Carpenters: The Widow of Sarepta with her two sticks.  
*Liber Boonen*, fol. 445<sup>r</sup>.

[In front of Sara shall go an Egyptian woman called *Agar* having loaded on her shoulders bread and water, and in her right hand this roll: *A facie Sarae domine mee ego fugio*, 'I flee from the face of Sarai, my mistress'. And on her right side shall go an Angel having this roll: *Revertere ad dominam tuam et humiliare sub manibus illius*, 'Return to thy mistress, and humble thyself under her hand.']

Only two of the women in the illustrations, however, are actually carrying such a roll. The Mother of Samson has one, with nothing on it; the Widow of Sarepta has *En colligo duo ligna* (Behold, I am gathering two sticks: Figs 11a and 11b).<sup>87</sup> But the few remaining guild accounts suggest that the characters in the procession did have writings of some sort: they talk of 'the lad who carried the writing', 'the painter who renewed the titles (*tituli*)', 'the wife of Jan Lanckmans who cut out the two titles', and 'Francis Le Renier for the painting of the

<sup>87</sup> III Kings 17. 12.



Figure 11b. The Carpenters: The Widow of Sarephta with her two sticks.  
*Liber Boonen*, fol. 445<sup>r</sup> (detail).



above-written titles'.<sup>88</sup> Whether these were for full-scale conversations or were merely name-badges is not clear.

There is however a less strenuous mode of reading which is still typological, in the sense that the women are seen as prefiguring the Virgin, but which does not demand such detailed knowledge. Another seventeenth-century programme describes the women as 'représentant chacune d'elle par quelque vertu singulière la très-sainte Vierge Marie' (each one representing the Blessed Virgin Mary by some particular quality).<sup>89</sup> Though it uses the same material, this approach yields a slightly different result. En masse, the particular representative virtue demonstrated by each of these women builds up, by proxy, a 'character sketch' of the Virgin Mary. It still requires the reader to know the Old Testament story, but the point of the comparison is a more generalized one. It creates an image which relates more to the Virgin of popular cult rather than of scholarship.

We all have our stereotypes of the image of the Virgin Mary constructed through the ages as a role model for Christian womanhood. Marina Warner, brought up with the traditional twentieth-century Catholic icon, speaks of it as representing 'the quintessence of many qualities that east and west have traditionally regarded as feminine: yieldingness, softness, gentleness, receptiveness, mercifulness, tolerance, withdrawal'.<sup>90</sup> Within these parameters, she can be Virgin, Queen, Bride, Mother, Intercessor. She cannot, thinks Warner, be easily turned into 'a model for the New Woman', 'the steely champion of the oppressed

<sup>88</sup> SAL 11727, fol. 135<sup>v</sup>: Grocers Accounts (1571/2), Axa: 'aen den ijonghe die den brief draecht j st'; SAL 11727, fol. 173<sup>v</sup>: Grocers Accounts (1585/6), Axa: 'Noch voer Die briuen te ~~maechen~~ maeken xv st'; Accounts of the Old Shoemakers (1681), quoted in Van Even, *L'Omgang de Louvain*, p. 62, Mother of Samson: 'Item, aen den Schilder voor het vernieuwen van de titels 4-16'; SAL 2208, fol. 193<sup>v</sup>, 165<sup>v</sup>, quoted Van Even, *L'Omgang de Louvain*, p. 61, Spicers (1681) have taken over Rebecca from the Mercers: 'Item, betaelt aen de huysvrouw van Jan Lanckmans voor het snyden van twee titels 4-4 [. . .] Iten, betaelt aen Francis Le Renier voor het schilderen van de voorschreve twee titels.'

<sup>89</sup> Van Even, *L'Omgang de Louvain*, pp. 57-59. Undated, possibly 1648? This belongs to the increasing tradition of tourist handbooks for *ommegangen*. The descriptions are shorter than the *Halboek*, but sometimes more explicit: 'Lya, femme de Jacob, bien parée, ayant en sa main mandragora, parsque pour ce fruit elle avoit obtenu sa fecondité' (p. 57; Leah, wife of Jacob, well attired, having in her hand mandragora, because through this fruit she acquired her fecundity); 'La mère des sept Machabées, vefve avec sept fils, tous prestes à mourir pour la loy de Dieu' (p. 59; The mother of the seven Maccabees, a widow with seven sons, all ready to die for the Law of God).

<sup>90</sup> Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p. xxiv.

and a woman of action and resolve'.<sup>91</sup> At first, the Leuven women seem to confirm this, but then an unexpected note creeps in. A selection (there is a temptation to multiply examples, but it must be resisted) will demonstrate — perhaps *betray* would be a better word — the attitude of the late medieval devisers to the patron they were celebrating.

Some antitypes present the Virgin as romantic heroine. Abishag (in the *Speculum* a type of virginal gestation, from the Visitation),<sup>92</sup> for example, conveys beauty, royalty, chaste love: all themes of the Assumption and Coronation, the Virgin as Queen of Heaven and Bride of Christ. The romantic image is underlined by the costume descriptions. Costume transmits an emotional effect besides giving each guild an opportunity for display:

Dese [Abishag] sal sitten als een schoone maeght met hangende haere // met eender croonen op haer hooft // maer sij sal aen hebben eenen kerspenen doek daer die vlechten van haeren haere sullen doer hangen // want sij gehoudt was // al en beken-dense de Coninck niet.

[This one shall sit like a beautiful maiden, with flowing hair, with a crown on her head, though she shall have a goffered veil through which the tresses of her hair shall hang, because she was handfasted to but not known [physically] by the King.]

Dese [Hester] sal sitten costelijck verchiert ende gecroont als eene Coninginne // ende sal zijn seer schoon van aensicht [. . .] Achter haer sullen comen ij Iouffrouwen die haeren sleijp sullen dragen // ende een out eerbaer man gecleet met eenen sacke ende eerde op zijn hooft.<sup>93</sup>

[This one shall sit expensively attired and crowned like a queen, and shall be very lovely of face [. . .] After her shall come two maidens which shall carry her train, and a worshipful old man dressed in sackcloth with earth on his head.]

Inevitably many of the Old Testament women reflect the maternal qualities of Mary: fruitfulness, nurture, and protection. The opening figures are all philo-progenitive and surrounded by children: Sara, the wife of Abraham and mother

<sup>91</sup> Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, p. 338.

<sup>92</sup> III Kings I. 3–4, 15; *Speculum*, *Joys*, lines 67–70, *Mirour*, lines 4987–88; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 444<sup>r</sup>. Abishag slept with King David and warmed him, but remained a virgin; the Virgin similarly kept the King of Heaven for nine months in her womb (the phrase used is *in gremio*, 'in her lap' or 'her embrace', shifting the emphasis from the King's embrace to the handmaid's) and yet remained a virgin. The episode of the Visitation centres on Mary's pregnancy.

<sup>93</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 453<sup>r</sup>.

of the race,<sup>94</sup> is followed by Rebecca,<sup>95</sup> and then Leah and Rachel with their handmaidens, who between them gave birth to the twelve Tribes of Israel,<sup>96</sup> while the final figure is the Mother of the Maccabees, followed by her seven sons.<sup>97</sup> She is the archetypal stoic maternal figure, approving the self-sacrifice of her sons rather than that they should break the Law. Others are the expected Pietà figures of maternal suffering: Naomi lamenting the death of her sons;<sup>98</sup> and the mother of Tobias lamenting his absence,<sup>99</sup> in the *Speculum* illustrating the desolation of Mary after Christ's final bodily departure at the Ascension.<sup>100</sup> Their misery is communicated by gesture: Naomi 'sal sitten als eene droeue weduwe // schreijende ende haer mesmoedelijck hebbende' (shall sit like a mourning widow, weeping and behaving despondently).<sup>101</sup>

Some celebrate her role as peacemaker. The Virgin protects us from the justifiable wrath of God; this was foretold, says the *Speculum*,

Primo per Abigail,<sup>102</sup> uxorem stulti Nabal de Carmelo,  
Quae placavit regem David.<sup>103</sup>

First be fonde [*stupid*] Nabals wife, the jentyle Abigael,  
Whilk pesid [*appeased*] the king Dauid.<sup>104</sup>

In Leuven Abigail the appeaser comes to bribe David with provisions, with a caravan of asses,

met bellen inden hals // ghelaeden met broode // v. gecochte hamels // ij leren vaetkens  
met wijne // v. maten brijpappe // C. coruen rosijnen // ende ij<sup>c</sup> clonten vijghen //  
Ende achter haer sullen comen v. Ionck dienstjouffrouwen deen met een broot  
suijckers // dander met eenen pot groenen gingbeer // die derde // cruijt / geleije ende

<sup>94</sup> Genesis 16–18, 21; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 421<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>95</sup> Genesis 24; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 422<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>96</sup> Genesis 35. 22–26; *Liber Boonen*, fols 423<sup>r</sup>–424<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>97</sup> II Maccabees 7. 1–42; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 454<sup>r–v</sup>.

<sup>98</sup> Ruth 1. 20; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 436<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>99</sup> Tobit 5. 23–28, 10. 4–5; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 451<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>100</sup> *Speculum*, 35. 39–50; *Mirour*, lines 3743–50.

<sup>101</sup> Ruth 1. 3; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 436<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>102</sup> 1 Kings 25. 14–35.

<sup>103</sup> *Speculum*, 37. 51–52.

<sup>104</sup> *Mirour*, lines 3955–56. This Middle English translation (late fourteenth/early fifteenth century and so slightly earlier than the Worthy Women of the *ommeegang*) is quoted from the edition by Avril Henry (see above note 39).

j. pot met sucaden // die vierde een lac met tregien // die v<sup>e</sup>. eenen corff met appelen  
van granaden oft orangien etcetera.<sup>105</sup>

[with bells round their necks, laden with bread, five bought sheep, two small leather jars of wine, five measures of parched corn, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs. And after her shall come five young serving-maidens, one of them with a sugar-loaf, the second with a pot of green ginger, the third spices, jam, and a pot with candied fruit, the fourth a cloth [?] with sweetmeats, the fifth a basket with pomegranates or oranges, etc.]

But some have rather unexpected ways of peacemaking:

Haec beatissima mediatrix jam praefata  
Etiam fuit per mulierem prudentem in Abela praefigurata.<sup>106</sup>

Also was fortakned [*prefigured*] Marie our mediatrice  
Sometymes in Abela by a womman fulle wise.<sup>107</sup>

When Seba rose against King David, he was chased into the city of Abela by David's captain Joab, who swore to destroy the city for taking him in. But a wise woman parleyed with Joab, and agreed with him that the city should be spared if Seba were given up: 'And the woman said to Joab: Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee from the wall.'<sup>108</sup> And that is what the illustration shows (Fig. 12).

This is an unexpectedly proactive dimension to our patron and protectress. The next chapter of the *Speculum* takes it further yet. Mary does not only protect us against God's vengeance upon our sins, to protect us from sinning in the first place she fights against the devil. He tempts us to pride, wrath, envy:

His et aliis multi vitiis diabolus nos impugnatur,  
Sed defensatrix nostra Maria nos protegit et propugnat.  
Quapropter ipsam illa laudabilis mulier praefiguravit,  
Quae turrim Thebes ab impugnatione Abimelech defensavit.  
Populus, timens Abimelech, super turrim se recipiebat;  
Abimelech autem eos cum turri succendere volebat;  
Mulier quaedam fragmen molae desursum jactabat,  
Et caput Abimelech tangens, ipsum excerebrabat.<sup>109</sup>

With thire [*these*] and many othere vice the feend mankinde impugnys,  
Bot oure deffensatrice Marie for us alway propugnys [*fights for*].

<sup>105</sup> 1 Kings 25. 16; *Speculum*, 37. 51–68; *Mirour*, lines 3955–72; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 440<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> *Speculum* 37. 83–84.

<sup>107</sup> *Mirour*, lines 3987–88.

<sup>108</sup> 11 Kings 20. 21; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 442<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>109</sup> *Speculum* 38. 53–60.



Figure 12. The Brewers: The Woman of Abela with the head of Seba.  
*Liber Boonen*, fol. 442<sup>v</sup>.

Wharefore a prisefulle [praiseworthy] womman Our Lady prefigurid,  
Whilk [which] the toure of Thebes fro Abymalech deffendid.  
The folk, Abymalech dredeing, went on the toure withinne,  
And he both thaym and the toure wald in fyre set and brynne [burn].  
A pece of a mylnestone threwe doune there a womman,  
And the heved of Abymalech touching, brayned hym right than.<sup>110</sup>

He was not however instantly brained, for 'he called hastily to his armourbearer, and said to him: Draw thy sword and kill me: lest it should be said that I was slain by a woman. He did as he was commanded and slew him'.<sup>111</sup> Not surprisingly, the Woman of Thebes was sponsored by the *Molders* (Millers' guild) (Fig. 13).<sup>112</sup>

<sup>110</sup> *Mirour*, lines 4057–64.

<sup>111</sup> Judges 9. 54.

<sup>112</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 434<sup>v</sup>.



Figure 13. The Millers. The Woman of Thebes and Abimelech.  
*Liber Boonen*, fol. 434<sup>r</sup>.

Though the *Speculum* subscribes to the Christian paradox of non-violent battle and victorious defeat — ‘In praecedenti capitulo audivimus quomodo Christus vicit diabolum per passionem, / Consequenter audiamus quomodo Maria vicit eum per compassionem’; ‘Herd nowe þat Christ ouercome the feende by his passioune, / Heres [*hear*] how Oure Ladye ouercome hym be compassioune’<sup>113</sup> — that is to say, by suffering along with Christ’s sufferings, the heroines who illustrate this passive conquest are Judith slashing off the head of Holofernes<sup>114</sup> and Jael pinning Sisera to the floor through the brain with a tent-peg:<sup>115</sup> ‘Sic Maria clavis sanctae crucis hostem nostrum perforavit’ (‘So Marye with the naile of the Crosse has striken thorgh oure enemy’).<sup>116</sup> In the Leuven procession Sisera is shown with the tent-peg right through his head (Fig. 14),<sup>117</sup>

<sup>113</sup> *Speculum* 30. 1–2; *Mirour*, lines 3205–06.

<sup>114</sup> Judith 13. 8–10; *Liber Boonen*, fol. 452<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>115</sup> Judges 4. 17–22; 5. 24–27.

<sup>116</sup> *Speculum*, 30. 83; *Mirour*, line 3287.

<sup>117</sup> *Liber Boonen*, fol. 433<sup>r</sup>.



Figure 14. The Smiths: Jael and Sisera. *Liber Boonen*, fol. 433<sup>r</sup>.

an ingenious way of incorporating violence and heroism in the accepted mode, not to say deception and chicanery, into a non-violent gospel.<sup>118</sup>

This image of Mary is hardly the passive 'feminine' character of the modern stereotype. Despite the paradox invoked in the *Speculum*, where we are meant to realize that suffering may be a positive thing, and as courageous as retaliation, the immediate and probably lasting picture from these characters in the *omme-gang* is one of Amazon-like aggression. Perhaps the citizens of Leuven did expect Mary their patron and protectress to take up arms against the threat of invasion.<sup>119</sup> In the *Speculum*, the Woman of Thebes and the Woman of Abela are both hurling missiles down from a city wall. To the late fifteenth century, she

<sup>118</sup> This stress on decapitation and other cranial injuries takes its cue from God's words to the serpent concerning Eve: 'she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel' (Genesis 3. 15).

<sup>119</sup> There is a very similar motif in the Royal Entry of Joanna the Mad (see note 5), who was presented with a sequence of Amazon worthies to emulate, besides her own mother Isabella la catolica, shown receiving the submission of the Moorish general at the conquest of Granada. Perhaps Mary was expected to do for Leuven what Joanna was being urged to do for Brussels and the Low Countries in general.

clearly was 'the steely champion of the oppressed and a woman of action and resolve'.

The fact that this part of the procession is dominated by women clearly does not condemn it to favour and to prettiness. It is pleasant to see this and, from a feminist point of view, how occasionally the distinguished men are relegated to second place, as with Sarah and Abraham, or Sephora (Zipporah) and Moses. The nature of this foregrounding varies. Sometimes there is a sense of passive becoming active, such as the recipients of miracles, though we tend to remember them rather than the miracle workers themselves. But it is not history rewritten as her story, because in so many cases it was her story in the first place. The women of the Old Testament were forces to be reckoned with, and their chroniclers give them full credit for this. The original Boaz is a bit player to Ruth and Naomi; Holofernes and Sisera are the victims of Judith and Jael. Ahasuerus may be the Great King, with the power of life and death in his glance, but the book is the Book of Esther. Deborah may only have been one of the many Judges of Israel, but nobody seems in the slightest surprised that she is a Judge. Even a victim like Susanna takes central stage. Many of them are the victims and eventual winners of stories of harem in-fighting, vindicated by the birth of sons; but others, like Tamar and Zipporah, strike out shockingly and courageously within the patriarchal law of the time to reprove their negligent men. Rahab, Michal, Abigail, all rescue their men with barefaced verve. They don't need a Carol Ann Duffy<sup>120</sup> to retrieve them from under the shadow of their men and celebrate them. Indeed, when I went back to her, I realized there was only one Old Testament Mrs in the whole book — and she was Delilah.

<sup>120</sup> Carol Ann Duffy, *The World's Wife* (London: Picador, 1999).



## ACCOMMODATION AND POSSESSIONS OF CHAMBERS OF RHETORIC IN THE PROVINCE OF HOLLAND

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**T**he chief aims of the Chambers of Rhetoric were to express in poetry and in plays a diversity of opinions and feelings. The word 'chamber' in this respect has a derivative meaning, as in the expression *kamer houden* (to hold a meeting). This essay investigates the notion of 'chamber' in its more original sense of 'room or location in which meetings or gatherings of an institute or a society are held'.

Archival research has made clear that Chambers of Rhetoric in some larger villages or towns were able to command a lasting home where meetings could take place and where the facilities and the interior were adapted to their specific needs and wishes. In smaller places the local inn provided a space for their meetings. A fairly large number of places where the Rhetoricians 'held chamber' is known and if they had a designated location then that was often situated in one of the buildings of the local authorities. For instance, the Rhetoricians in Delft had a room upstairs in the Weigh House and later on in the attic of the Loy or Saay Hall. The latter was part of the Prinsenhof, a former convent which in 1572 became the residence of the Prince of Orange. From 1658 onwards it was the room which was used by the weavers' Guild. In The Hague the Rhetoricians had for a long time the use of a room in the Town Hall, and in Leiden they were able to use a variety of venues such as that in the Zijlpoort, one of the town's gatehouse towers. The use of governmental buildings can be seen as a hidden subsidy. If the Rhetoricians had to resort to renting space in privately owned dwellings, it emerges from financial records that they could often count on an annual subsidy from city funds to help with the cost of the rent and sometimes for heating and lighting as well.



Figure 15. A stone set in the wall of the meeting room of the *Sociëteit* of Sommeldijk has the motto *Met Herten Minnende* (Loving with the Heart), of the Chamber in the form of a rebus; before 1624. Photo F. C. van Boheemen and Th. C. J. van der Heijden.

To this day incidental evidence of earlier Rhetoricians activity is still common: in the restoration of the old Town Hall in The Hague, *Met gheneuchten* (With enjoyment), the device of the Chamber *De Corenbloemen* (The Cornflowers), was found on the beams in the attic, together with some other, indecipherable, words. The Rhetoricians were able to make use of this space until 1631; after that it became a grain store. In order to compensate for the loss of their venue *De Corenbloemen* received an annual subsidy of fifty pounds from 1631 until 1669. The society in Sommeldijk was heir to the local Chamber *Hoe langher hoe liever* (The longer the more beloved). This Chamber seems to have been in decline a few years after 1624, and its housing and its possessions were taken over by the Archers' Guild in 1632. When that Guild was disbanded in 1803 all the remaining possessions of the Chamber came into the ownership of the local authorities. On the wall of the meeting room two rectangular stones have been bricked in, on which the devices of the two Sommeldijk Chambers have been recorded: *Hoe langher hoe liever* and *Met herten minnende* (Loving with all one's heart) (Fig. 15).

Until fairly recently a small cart, a giant's head, and a round shield, all used in the *ommegang* (procession), were kept in the attic of the building.

There was some risk attached to the use of government buildings. Rhetoricians not infrequently expressed sentiments in public that did not go down well with the local or national authorities and then they were prevented, as a form of punishment, from using their meeting place. In 1620, for instance, the Rhetoricians in Goedereede were ordered to clear out all their possessions in the space of two hours from the attic of the Town Hall and were banned from using it altogether. It seems not wholly fanciful to connect this prohibition with the publication of a lampoon in that year in which, according to the *Resolutieboek*, secular and religious authorities were insulted.<sup>1</sup> Things cannot have been terribly grave for in 1622 the Rhetoricians were again ensconced in the attic when the magistrate came to control the use of beer: a control that the assembled company did not take too seriously since the Rhetoricians invited the officials 'to come and have a drink; it would be far too much trouble to take the beer away, you could break your legs'.<sup>2</sup> These and other similarly cheerful remarks were the reason they lost their meeting room again and now for a longer period: when they renewed their request that they might use the attic in 1627, it was rejected with a large majority of votes by the local council.

Behaviour in the Chambers was not infrequently the subject of discussion in meetings of town councils. In popular usage the Rhetoricians were known as *kannenkijkers en wijvensmijters* (tipplers and wife beaters) (Fig. 16). We do not have any evidence for the beating of wives, but minutes of meetings of church and town councils regularly mention Rhetoricians overindulging in alcohol. Moreover, meetings of Chambers were sometimes disturbed by gatecrashers; in 1652 the Leiden Chambers were ordered to keep the curtains open so that the sheriff would be able to see and control the proceedings:

And in order that in future all irregularities in the aforementioned Chambers caused by drunkenness and other offences against the established order may be better guarded against and discovered, it will be forbidden to have made for or to hang blinds or curtains in the windows in the places where the Chambers hold their meetings and to

<sup>1</sup> The *Resolutieboek* contained the minutes of the meetings of the magistrates. See F. C. van Boheemen and Th. C. J. van der Heijden, *Met Minnen Versaemt* (Delft: Eburon, 1999) and Van Boheemen and Van der Heijden, *Retoricael Memoriael* (Delft: Eburon, 1999), pp. 244 and 247.

<sup>2</sup> Gemeente Archief Leiden, *Archief Gilden*, inv. no. 1484. See also Gemeente Archief Leiden, S.A. I, inv. no. 71, fols 42<sup>v</sup>–44<sup>v</sup>.



Figure 16. Silver tankard lid with shield of Delft Chamber *Rapunbloem*; seventeenth century; *Het Prinsenhof* Town Museum, Delft. Photo F. C. van Boheemen and Th. C. J. van der Heijden.

change the venues of the meetings of the said Chambers unless those in the court [of justice] have been informed.<sup>3</sup>

In many instances therefore the magistrates either made a venue available or gave a rent subsidy to the Rhetoricians. It is clear that they wished to keep an eye on what went on in the Chambers and that that surveillance extended not only to the number of people and the behaviour of the members but also to the possessions of the Chambers.<sup>4</sup> From the 1561 inventory of the Leiden Chamber

<sup>3</sup> The original texts of all the archival documents can be found in Van Boheemen and Van der Heijden, *Met Minnen Versaemt*.

<sup>4</sup> Van Boheemen and Van der Heijden, *Met Minnen Versaemt*, pp. 45–51 and 105–23.

*Geneucht is 't al* (Joy is everything) which had probably merged with *Liefde is 't Fondament* (Love is the foundation)<sup>5</sup> it appears that the list was commandeered by the town council 'in order to allow my lords to do whatever they will deem it necessary to do'. According to a document dated a few weeks later, the town council allotted to the Chamber the right to make use of the possessions but exclusively in order to carry out the activities of the Chamber. It is not clear exactly what happened but the decree states that the possessions of the Chamber had been confiscated by the magistrates and are to be returned. The inventory shows that at the time of the confiscation a number of things had been damaged or had perished. How long the magistrates kept the possessions of the Chamber in their custody is not known. In the Leiden archival documents from 1548 to 1560 the Rhetoricians feature a number of times. It is not very likely that the Chambers were at the time prohibited from carrying out all their usual activities. In 1561 the Rhetoricians promised that they would keep the possessions properly and would not sell them off or let them disappear in any other way. They even promised to augment and increase the goods and they explicitly acknowledged the right of the magistrates with regard to their possessions.

That as late as 1597 there was still a controlling magistrate is evident from the fact that the Chamber received an official visit and that that control could not be properly exercised because the key to one of the chests in the Chamber was not available. Three days later the council put on record officially who should be in possession of which keys.

The Prince and the *Factor* got the keys to the door, the moneybox, and the chest with the three locks which apparently held the treasures of the Chamber. The Catering Masters received the keys to the door, the cellar, the chest, the moneybox, and the wine cellar, and one of them held in safekeeping the key to the small cupboard with the crockery as well. Naturally, the Emperor of the Chamber had the right to have various keys in his possession.

It becomes apparent that in other places in the province of Holland too the authorities exercised some control over the possessions of the Chambers. In Gouda (1603) the Rhetoricians were given permission, when the authorities checked their assets, to sell as much linen as they thought fit, provided that the revenue of that sale would be used to add to the silverware of the Chamber. In Gouda too it was explicitly mentioned that the value of the inventory should not be allowed to decrease. In 1629 the Gouda Rhetoricians handed in a list of their possessions to the court which then annotated it with *Men sal 't duersijen* (we will look through it).

<sup>5</sup> Van Boheemen and Van der Heijden, *Retoricael Memoriael*, pp. 492–93.

One does not get the impression, from the available archival material, that there were rules for the regular handing in of inventories; rather, it was a means of incidental control, as becomes apparent from an archival item from Maassluis in 1633.<sup>6</sup> Only in Noordwijk were lists of inventories made with some regularity between 1648 and 1678. It may be, however, that the extremely fragmented nature of the archival material is responsible for the absence of evidence of regular surveillance by the authorities.

That the authorities could not only demand to see an inventory but were also perceived as the lawful owner of the possessions is apparent from various archival documents. The profit from the sale of Rhetoricians property after the dissolution of the Chambers reverted to the coffers of the local authority, and the possessions of the abolished Chambers had to be taken to the sheriff's office or to the Town Hall.<sup>7</sup> Only in some cases did the property remain in more or less private ownership. The society *Trou Moet Blijcken* in Haarlem still has the effects of the famous eponymous Chamber of Rhetoric from the sixteenth and seventeenth century, amongst which features the most extensive and beautiful collection of Rhetoricians shields in the Netherlands.

Much of the property of the Chambers of Rhetoric has been lost but here and there a substantial amount has survived in the attics of a number of Town Halls. Many items, in particular painted shields, ended up in local museums or were given a place of honour in new Town Halls or town archives (Fig. 17). As a result the Haarlem society *Trou Moet Blijcken* and the Vlaardingen Town Hall possess a unique collection of shields; the same is true of the St Jorisdoelen, the former quarters of the Archers of St George in Noordwijk, and the Chamber of Antiquities, a museum, in Beverwijk.

As, however, the major part of the possessions of the Chambers of Rhetoric has not survived, we have to rely chiefly on the surviving lists of inventories and other archival items to get an impression of the interior of the venue of a Chamber of Rhetoric. In this contribution we will try to reconstruct the nature of their possessions and their relationship to the interior of the meeting place of a Chamber. We will then compare our findings with the scarce remaining iconographic material of the Chambers.

<sup>6</sup> The only list known from Maassluis. See Van Boheemen and Van der Heijden, *Retoricael Memoriael*, p. 661.

<sup>7</sup> As in Schiedam (1630), Rijswijk (1682), and Vlaardingen (1749); see Van Boheemen and Van der Heijden, *Retoricael Memoriael*, pp. 770, 748, 805.



Figure 17. Wooden device of Maassluis Chamber *Mosterdbloem*; 1639; Town Hall, Maassluis. Photo F. C. van Boheemen and Th. C. J. van der Heijden.

### *Collections of Books*

It must have been important for a Chamber of Rhetoric to have the use of books. First of all works of reference, which could be used for finding answers to the questions such as those set for Rhetoricians competitions. There are quite a number of published collections of the contributions of Chambers taking part in competitions, which contain references in the margins to the source material. Texts used by or referred to in competitions with which a Chamber was closely involved must have been in their possession, either in manuscript or in print.

According to the inventory from Leiden (1561) there were two chests in the Chamber filled with manuscripts of plays and poems, but more detailed evidence is unfortunately lacking. A separate item mentions the three plays written the year before by the shipbuilder Ghysbrecht Heyndricxs, the shipbuilder Ghijsbrecht Jansz., and the carpenter Bouwen Jansz. Two of these plays, according to a subsidy recorded in the accounts, were performed in 1560 on the occasion of the *ommegangsday* (the day of the procession): a play of David and Berseba, meaning Bathsheba, and a play about Job. Neither text survived. It might be that the third play was performed at the competition of 1561 in Rotterdam. We do not know which author was responsible for each play. Probably there were other books belonging to the Chamber in these chests or they were kept in a bookcase. The inventory only mentions the work of Titus Livy (59 BC–AD 17) about the history of Rome, *Ab urbe condita*. The Chamber must have had a rich collection of books, but this was apparently the only one confiscated by the authorities sometime before 1561.

According to the inventory from Leiden (1597) the bookcase also contained *een Josephus*, one or more volumes of *The History of the Jewish War* by Flavius Josephus (AD 37–c. 95). It also held three new books by Joannes Charion, paid for by the revenue of fines imposed on members. Nothing further is known about these. The Chamber also owned works by Johannes Sleidanus (born c. 1506), a German humanist and historian who was one of the first to begin a description of the Reformation during the reign of Charles V. His *Commentarii* was published in a Dutch translation in 1584. A work by the Roman historian Livy is mentioned, probably the same book as that recorded in the 1561 inventory. A chronicle of the history of the Netherlands could possibly refer to Pieter Christiaan Bor's *Oorspronck, begin, ende aanvang der Nederlantsche oorlogen, beroertes ende burgerlijke oneenicheden* (1595) (*Origins, beginning and start of the Dutch wars, troubles, and other civic conflicts*). Other items in the bookcase were the Chamber's collection of refrains, a typical Rhetoricians poetic form; an old



refrain book in quarto; an empty and still new little *registerken* (a record book), possibly for an index of plays or poems; and a rectangular songbook in octavo. The Leiden Town Archive still holds a refrain book, with poems by the Leiden Fool Piero (Fig. 18), mostly for competitions, and the songbook for the Chamber which besides texts for competitions contains chiefly May and New Year songs.<sup>8</sup>

The inventory of the Leiden book chest in 1723 does not give a very clear idea of its contents. The Chamber possessed a Bible, a dictionary, and some of their own scripts, probably of plays. Then there are a few publications with contributions to competitions (Leiden, 1596 and 1598). Furthermore some texts of unidentifiable tragedies, an unnamed book in Latin, a book by one Dijkbroeck, a book by one Jacob Kas, perhaps a second volume, and eight record books. The Chamber *Liefde is 't Fondament* was closed down in 1736; the inventory from that year mentions, summarily, some items encountered in its older inventories. The book collection is only referred to as 'some old books'.

From the accounts of the Haarlem Chamber *Trou Moet Blijcken* it appears that in 1607 money was set aside for the binding of Karel van Mander's *Schilderboeck*<sup>9</sup> (1604). In 1608 diverse unspecified books were bought from a bookseller. However, the 1610 inventory allows us to assemble some more precise information. In the chest or the bookcase *Trou Moet Blijcken* kept the following:

Seven books about the history of the Jewish people from the creation until the year 66 of Our Lord by the historian Flavius Josephus.

An edition of *Spelen van sinnen vol scoone moralisatiën* [. . .] *ghespeelt binnen der stadt van Andtwerpen* (Antwerp 1562) [Morality plays full of beautiful moralizations [. . .] played in the town of Antwerp]. [This contains the contributions to the 1561 Antwerp competition.]

An edition of K. van Mander's *'t Schilderboeck*.

A printed edition of plays performed in Haarlem in 1606, *'t Constthoonende Juweel* (Haarlem 1607) [The Jewel which shows Art].

A volume of poems by J. B. Houwaert, *De vier wterste* (Antwerp 1583), in which he shows himself to be a Reformation poet. Houwaert's educational book for women, *Pegasides pleyne ofte den Lusthof der Maegden* (Antwerp 1582/83) [Pegasides' square or the Pleasure Garden for Women].

<sup>8</sup> J. Koppenol, 'Piero, de zot van Leiden', *Literatuur*, 18.4 (2001) 234–44, offers the most recent information about Piero. For the collections of books, see Gemeente Archief Leiden, *Archief Gilden*, inv. no. 1473–74.

<sup>9</sup> A collection of biographies of famous classical, Italian, Dutch, and German painters.



Figure 18. Portrait of Leiden Fool; c. 1625;  
*De Lakenhal*, Town Museum, Leiden. Photo A. Dingjan.

*Den Lusthof van Retorica [. . .] der Hollantsche cameren 9 [. . .] binnen Leyden* (Leiden 1597) [The Pleasure Garden of Rhetoric [. . .] of the Chambers of Holland], containing the contributions to the 1596 Leiden competition.

*Der Reden-Ryckers stichtighe tsamenkomste [. . .] Ghehouden binnen Schiedam* (Rotterdam 1603) [The instructive meeting of the Rhetoricians [. . .] held in Schiedam], with the plays of the 1603 Schiedam competition.

An old unidentified Bible. The *Belgische ofte Nederlandsche historie van onser tijden* (1599) [Belgian and Dutch history of our times] by the historian Emanuel van Meteren (1535–1612). He issued a new edition in 1608 with the title *Commentariën ofte memoriën van den Nederlantschen Staet, handel, oorloghen ende geschiedenissen* [Commentaries or memories of the Dutch State, trade, wars, and historical events].

The Maassluis Chamber recorded their ownership of some books in 1633: a Bible and a book of Josephus, very likely his *Jewish War*, which was also found in the possession of some other Chambers. Another item records that some scripts are kept in a chest, but the inventory provides no further information. It is curious that in the inventory of the Noordwijk Rhetoricians of 1641 only the *Constthoonende Juweel*, the edition of the texts of the Haarlem competition of 1606, is mentioned. In 1642 an edition of the 1641 Rijnsburg competition was added: *Reijnsburchs Angier-hoff, beplant met alle de wercken ende liedekens die op 't selve Rhetorices-Beroep verhandelt zijn* (*The Rijnsburg' Garden of the Carnations planted with all the plays and songs which were presented in that Rhetoricians gathering*). In 1644 and 1646 the Noordwijk Chamber is inspected again, but no further information is given about additions to its books. In 1661 an addition to earlier lists is recorded but does not mention the contents of the chest. In 1662 the Noordwijk Chamber turns out to be the owner of a book titled *The hoofdleeer der consciëntiën* (*The Main Tenets of Conscience*). This could be a reference to a work by the humanist D. V. Coornhert, *Ware beschrijvinge der, consciëntiën* (1585) (*True Description of Conscience*).

The inventories may not always be complete. If, however, the data given above are exemplary for book collections of Holland Chambers then we can only conclude that they commonly consisted of a Bible and works about Jewish and classical history, as well as some about national and cultural history; editions of Rhetoricians competition texts; and, finally, some manuscripts with texts written by members.

### *Shields and Paintings*

Inventories regularly mention the possession of shields. These wooden panels were the signs of the Chambers, sometimes literally so. They were often beauti-

fully painted and decorated and showed the name of the Chamber, its device or motto, and the iconographic representation of the name and the device. It is not surprising that the inventories recorded the shield of the Chamber in question, but they also indicated the possession of shields of Chambers from other towns. It was the custom, in some of the larger competitions, to present the shields of the participants to the organizing Chamber. Such records help to build up a picture of the competition circuit in the province of Holland. In an inventory from Noordwijk (1661) an 'out blasoen van Delft 1547' (old shield of Delft 1547), could mean that the Noordwijk Chamber organized a competition in that year and was given the shield by the Delft Chamber.

The Noordwijk inventory of 1641 showed which Chambers participated in the Joyous Entry which was part of the competition. It recorded 'another five shields given to the chamber on the occasion of the entry in the year 1638, one of the Holland Chamber from Leiden, one of Oegstgeest, one of Rijnsburg, one of the Flemish Chamber from Haarlem, one of Wassenaar'.<sup>10</sup>

The descriptions in the inventories are often brief, no more than the ownership of the shields and their donors. Occasionally, as in the case of Delft a date or the maker of the shield is recorded. The 1661 Noordwijk inventory mentioned 'een blasoen by Swanenburg gemaict 1642' (a shield made by Swanenburg 1642). There were several seventeenth-century painters with that name but the likeliest candidate is the Leiden artist and mayor Isaac Claesz. van Swanenburg (c. 1538–1614). He married Maritgen Joostendochter and had ten children of whom three sons became painters. Neither Jacob Isaacs. van Swanenburg (c. 1571–1638), one of Rembrandt's teachers, nor his brother Willem (d. 1621) could have been the painters of the 1642 shield. The only candidate therefore is Nicolaas Isaacs. van Swanenburg who is known to have been active in his father's atelier in 1607. He then moved to The Hague but during the religious troubles of 1618–19 he fled from Contra-Remonstrant persecution to Noordwijk where he died in 1652. Nicolaas would not have found a commission to paint a Rhetoricians shield an unusual task; his father, likewise, had painted a shield for the Leiden Chamber *De Witte Acoleyen* (The White Columbines) in 1596. The Noordwijk St Jorisdoelen owned three shields, by different painters, showing the Circumcision of Jesus (1550, 1642, 1645). The 1642 shield is not signed but underneath the device of the Chamber it is possible to distinguish two swans. These are most probably

<sup>10</sup> It was not unusual for a town to have a Holland Chamber as well as a Flemish Chamber. After the Fall of Antwerp in 1585 thousands of refugees and immigrants from the Southern Netherlands settled in Holland and Zeeland and sometimes founded their own Chambers.

a reference to the family arms of the Van Swanenburgs; some members had two, some three swans. The combination of the source material and the pictorial evidence allows us to identify the painter of this shield as Nicolaas Isaacsz. van Swanenburg; the shield is, thus far, his only surviving work.

The 1646 list recorded 'een blasoen vereert van Jacob Gerritsz. van Velzen' (a shield given by Jacob Gerritsz. van Velzen). Most likely this refers to the 1645 shield in the St Jorisdoelen collection (Fig. 19). An inventory of the possessions of Jacob van Velzen, made after his death in 1655, showed that he owned two houses in Noordwijk and land in Noordwijk and nearby Offem, Voorhout and Noordwijkerhout. The 1645 Rhetoricians shield would seem to be, so far, the only work attributed to him.

With the help of the inventories therefore we are able to attribute the two seventeenth-century shields to their painters.<sup>11</sup> Neither Van Swanenburg nor Van Velzen were prominent artists, but other lists show that well-known painters too offered their services or were given commissions by the Chambers.

In 1610 the Haarlem Chamber *Trou Moet Blijcken* possessed a choice selection of shields both in the shape of painted wooden panels and as silver medallions (Fig. 20). They also owned the following:

A copper plate on which the shield of the Chamber is etched, designed by Master Heyndrick Goltzius and etched by Matham anno 1597.<sup>12</sup>

Another simple, small shield such as the children carry when they perform a play, made by Carel Vermander.<sup>13</sup>

Above all the best shield of the Chamber, drawn and designed by Mr. H. Goltzius and painted by Frans Pietersz., painter.<sup>14</sup>

The Chamber also owned shields painted by Jan Schodt and Jan Nagel and seventeen shields with arms 'cierlijck op houte schilden geschildert [. . .] by Niclaes Kemp' (elegantly painted on wooden panels [. . .] by Niclaes Kemp).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For a more extensive study of the Noordwijk devices, see G. de Moor, F. C. van Boheemen, and Th. J. C. van der Heijden, 'Noordwijkse rederijkerswedstrijden en blazoenen', *Holland*, 16.2 (1984), 121–33.

<sup>12</sup> Jacob Matham (1571–1631) was Goltzius's stepson.

<sup>13</sup> Children and youngsters are often shown in pictures of Entries carrying the shields of the Rhetoricians Chambers. Karel van Mander was the author of the *Schilderboeck* (1604) and was also active as a painter.

<sup>14</sup> This could be the Haarlem painter Frans Pietersz. de Grebber (1572/73–1649).

<sup>15</sup> Nothing further is known about Schodt and Nagel. The shields depict the arms of the Seventeen United Provinces on the occasion of the Twelve Year Truce (1609–1921) between



Figure 19. The Circumcision: Painted Device of Noordwijk Chamber *De lelykens onder den doornen*; 1645; Jacob Gerritsz. van Velsen; Rhetoricians shield in St Jorisdoelen collection in Noordwijk. Photo C. Boer and R. van Gulik.

Spain and the Republic. They were probably commissioned specially for the play or the spectacles performed to celebrate the Truce. Nicolaes Kemp (b. Haarlem?) painted the shields in 1609 and was still alive in 1653.



Figure 20. Sash of the messenger of the Haarlem Chamber *De Pellicanisten* with silver shields of participating Chambers in Competition in Haarlem 1606; *Sociëteit Trou Moet Blijcken*. Photo F. C. van Boheemen.



Figure 21. Jan Steen, *De rederijkers* (Painting); c. 1665; Brussels, Musée des Beaux Arts.

Names of artists, especially painters, can be found with some frequency in the lists of members of the Chambers. Frans Hals and his brother Dirk, Nicolaas Kemp, Salomon de Bray, Esaias van der Velde, Jan Wynants, Arie Brouwer, Jan Derk Vermeer, Richerd Brakenburg, and the brothers Gerrit and Job van Bercheyde were members of the Haarlem Chamber *De Wyngaertrancken* (The Vine Branches). It is thought that Jan Steen too was a member of a Chamber of Rhetoric; his paintings show Rhetoricians scenes and a self-portrait depicts him as a functionary of a Chamber (Fig. 21).

Quite a number of shields have survived, as is evident from the collections of the Haarlem society *Trou Moet Blijcken*, of the town of Vlaardingen, of the St Jorisdoelen in Noordwijk and the Oudheidkamer in Beverwijk. Not infrequently other examples are found in Holland museums and town halls (Fig. 22).



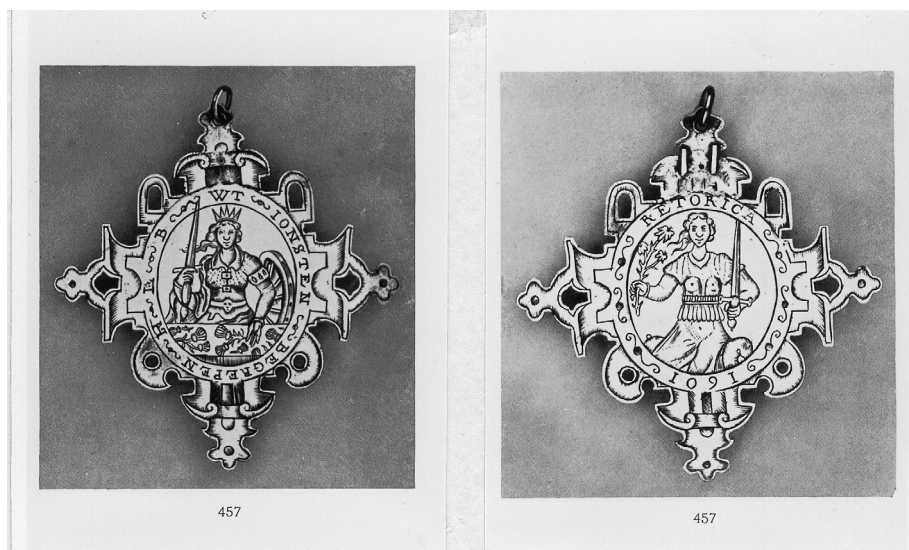


Figure 22. Front and back of small silver shield of Gouda Chamber *De Goudsblom*, given to *Trou Moet Blijcken* by the Gouda Chamber *De Goudsblom*, motto *Wt Ionsten Begrepen*, on the occasion of the competition in Haaarlem in 1606; Haarlem *Sociëteit Trou Moet Blijcken*. Photo F. C. van Boheemen and Th. C. J. van der Heijden.

### *Stage Costumes and Props*

In our search for possessions of Rhetoricians chambers we also encountered remarks in the archival material which concern theatrical activities in and outside the actual meeting places and these can sometimes be linked to stage performances. Such information considerably enhances our knowledge of performances in ways impossible earlier.

From the 1561 Leiden inventory it becomes apparent that the Chamber had all that was necessary: two old fool's caps and a new cap with collars and a *marot* (fool's head) with a leather belt. In the margin it is noted that the old caps have rotted away and the new one is in Rotterdam. There are wings to represent an angel, one pair of slippers and two wooden masks, and three paper armoured suits with helmets which could have been used to dress the army officers in the play of David and Bathsheba. We can only guess how the biblical story might be rendered on stage since the text of the play has not been found. There are

some coats for *sinnekens* with pockets and little hammers. These are very likely devilish attributes derived from Donar's thunderstone.<sup>16</sup>

The list also records a number of props. There was a drum with broken skins, but that has since been repaired. They possessed a sceptre with two paper crowns, which however had perished. Then there were two signs or boards which must have been used in a performance because they seem to indicate the names of mansions; *Ydele glorie* (Idle Glory) and *Ydelheyt der Ydelheyt* (Vanity of Vanities).<sup>17</sup> For the Corpus Christi procession there were seven shields or boards, but what they showed, whether the name of a character or an image, is not recorded in the inventory. The servant of the Chamber carried a board with a painting of four silver letters and three organ pipes. Five paper masks have meanwhile, according to the inventory, perished. Recorded as still extant is a paper devil's mask that, again taking our cue from the biblical story, could have been used in a dialogue between God and the devil in the play of Job. Pieces of decor are also stored in the Chamber: a mansion that is placed on the scaffold when they perform, and a representation of the globe with a tabernacle inside it. This could have been part of a *toog*, a tableau in the Leiden play for the competition in Rotterdam in 1561, in which the risen Christ was shown with the cross in his hand and the five stigmata whilst he stands on the devil, death, and the world.

After the liberation of Groningen from the Spanish armies in 1594 Prince Maurits of Orange returned in triumph to The Hague via Leiden. The Chamber *Liefde is 't Fondament* showed in a tableau how the Seven Provinces through God's mercy and the help of the House of Nassau were liberated from papal and Spanish tyranny whilst the Southern Netherlands were still occupied. The Flemish Chamber of Leiden showed, on top of a Triumphal Arch, the Victory of Gideon over the Midianites (Judges 7). According to the surviving accounts thirty-three people were involved in this and Gideon, the main character, wears a helmet of thick paper with a coloured plume made of the same paper and copper wire. His arm and leg armour is made of brass foil or Dutch gold, his *roccken* or coat of mail is trimmed with silk, and his legs are wrapped round with silk ribbons.

<sup>16</sup> See W. M. H. Hummelen, 'Sinnekens op prenten en schilderijen', *Oud-Holland*, 106 (1992), 117–42.

<sup>17</sup> See W. M. H. Hummelen, *Repertorium van het rederijkersdrama, 1500–ca.1620* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968) where *Ydele Glorie* is mentioned only in 3 G 4, the fourth play of the *Wercken der bermherticheydt* (printed edition 1591). Hummelen does not record a character called *Ydelheyt der ydelheyt*.

In 1596 *Liefde is 't Fondament* organized an extensive competition of which the greater part of the accounts have survived. For our purposes the section detailing the expenses of the Entry is most interesting. The organizing Chamber, which presented itself in a welcoming play, had spent money on purchases for the Entry of the Flemish Chamber of Leiden. There were twelve tyrants and they needed hose, tunics, and armour. Ribbons in various colours, red, yellow, green, and purple, were bought, and the costumes were adorned with brass foil. Crowns, lances, and plumes for helmets were acquired. The tyrants wore shoes of red leather and needed a quantity of red ribbons; their leg armour was made of green leather skins.

This information accords well with the description of the Flemish Leiden Entry as given in the edition of the competition texts.<sup>18</sup> *Pharao*, for instance, wore a long dress, in the Egyptian style, and the thigh guards of a suit of armour. His sleeves were covered in brass foil and he wore an antique hat with a crown on top. He had a shield and a lance with a bloodied, red vane. Another example is that of *Tarquinius Superbus*, dressed *arrogantly* as a Roman also with thigh armour and a costume covered with brass foil. He wore a crown and carried a sceptre and an antique weapon with a plume. Peacock feathers on his armour signified his pride. A salient detail about the welcoming play was that clothing needed to be bought for the two female characters *'tVerlangende Hart* (the Longing Heart) and *Cimona* but also coloured paper shaped to form Cimona's breasts: it was apparently still not allowed to have a woman play that role.

In 1597 *Liefde is 't Fondament* was again ordered to make an inventory. The Chamber owned seventeen coats of mail, one for every province, which were perhaps used for Maurice's Royal Entry in 1594. There were a grey monk's hood, a chasuble, the old fool's cap with the *marot*, two little tunics with small caps and hammers for the *sinnekens*, a tunic for the Inquisition, a High German dress, a white jacket (torn), a tunic (half white, half black), a bodice of green linen, seven coats of mail for the towns, and a storm hat of buffalo leather. In the farce *Vrou Lorse* the eponymous main protagonist, Mrs Slattern, wore a green bodice of coarse fabric. The farce was part of a competition in which the Leiden Fool Piero was a prominent performer. On that occasion a hat was purchased for Piero in his role as *Jonker Mors* (Sir Grubby). The name was a pun on the Fool's real

<sup>18</sup> See *Den Lusthof van Retorica [. . .] der Hollantse cameren [. . .] binnen Leyden* (Leiden, 1597) (The Pleasure Garden of Rhetoric of the Chambers of Holland [. . .]), containing the contributions to the 1596 Leiden competition. The brief account of the Haarlem Chamber *Trou Moet Blijcken* on the occasion of the Leiden Entry does not describe this in detail; see Van Boheemen and Van der Heijden, *Retoricael Memoriael*, pp. 376–77.

name, Pieter van der Mersch or Morsch and 'morsen', meaning 'to soil', 'to spill', or 'to deceive'. In the large black wardrobe were stowed twelve red baize skirts, four long ones and eight short ones, used for the Entry of 1596; two pirate caps of gold cloth; two tunics and hose for the *sinnekens*; one pair of blue hose; and a veil in blue, orange, and white. In the small cupboard above the little virginal, some of the old clothes of cheesecloth and cardboard were kept which had been used for the Entry into Delft in 1581.

In 1608 Haarlem's *Trou Moet Blijcken* spent money on costumes, namely three gilded bodices. A year later some money seems to have been used for the performance of a play on the occasion of the beginning of the Truce.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately the account is not specific about the connection between the play and the Truce. For clothing and textiles there is the following bill: twelve new, green chair cushions, filled with feathers; twenty-nine leather laces, of which seventeen are white and twelve red; and crimson cloth for making two tunics for the boys who carry the shield of the Chamber.

An official inventory of *Trou Moet Blijcken* dates from 1610, but it is not clear whether this happens at the instigation of the town council. The following items have a connection with the staging of plays: a large curtain hanging in front of the stage; a purple habit, stitched through with silk, and hose and tunic with green cords; a grey hat with a plume; the tunics for the boys who have to carry the shield of the Chamber; the costumes of all the characters in the Leiden Entry of 1596; some other, not further detailed, pieces of clothing; and four imitation gold crowns for the royal personages as they were represented in the play about the Truce. The information about 1596 and the Truce are explicitly mentioned in the inventory.

In 1617 there was a survey of the properties of the Delft Chamber, in particular of the *klederen en habijten* (costumes and habits), but also of other goods which were kept in the chest and in the wardrobes. In fact this turns out to be an enumeration of all the stage costumes and some of the props. Some can be related to Gijsbrecht van Hogendorp's tragedy (1616) about the murder of William of Orange in 1584. For instance, there is a record of clothes for characters who had to look Spanish. A silk orange cloak could have been worn by the actor playing Orange. The assassin, Balthasar Geraerts, was possibly disguised in a grey cloak with a pair of green velvet bands and wore a pair of grey French hose hemmed with small golden loops. The *Tydt* (Time) could have been adorned with the two wings mentioned at the bottom of the list: the wings of time? The inventory was probably made at the request of the Chamber of Charity, which

<sup>19</sup> See Hummelen, *Repertorium*, I OR 1.

owned the costumes and other props.<sup>20</sup> It would be tiresome to give here a detailed account of all the coats, pairs of hose, and tunics.<sup>21</sup> The contract between the Rhetoricians and the Chamber of Charity did not yield any profit for the latter. Perhaps that was the reason why it tried to auction all the possessions a year later; the sale amounted to 279 guilders.<sup>22</sup> The sale also included some items that had not been recorded in the inventory of the year before, such as a dragon made out of willow withies, a horse, and a satyr's head. It is noteworthy that some items, mainly costumes, were sold to other Chambers, such as those from Lier, Maasland, and Vlaardingen.

When, in 1622, the Amsterdam Academy<sup>23</sup> was sold to the orphanage its possessions also became the property of the buyer. Amongst these were all the painted *omdraeyende doecken* on the stage, that is, pieces of scenery painted on both sides that could be turned around their own axis.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, there were twenty-two shields of arms of important princes painted on oval panels; nine square coats of arms of the Republic; six coats of arms of princes painted on canvas; and two large shields from which the lamps were suspended, painted on the other side, with their blocks and pulleys. The descending heaven with its pulleys and cords and window shutters was also included. There were three tables, which could surround the square, with their trestles and benches, and a smaller table with two trestles. The stage itself could be extended with three pieces. A prison door with iron bars might have been used for Hooft's tragedy *Geeraert van*

<sup>20</sup> The *Kamer van Charitate* had been founded in Delft in 1597 in order to look after the poor of the city. Part of the income of such foundations came from the profits of performances of local Rhetoricians Chambers. In 1614 the Town Council of Delft, the Rhetoricians Chamber, and the Chamber of Charity signed an agreement which gave the Chamber of Charity the ownership of all costumes and other staging props.

<sup>21</sup> The list starts with two king's tunics of gold cloth, one with red and one with blue fond, with two silk aprons, also red and blue, with gold fringe and a gilded sceptre; a flesh coloured silk skirt embroidered with gold; a green and yellow skirt with a woven image; a small Spanish hose with a doublet of white and gold cloth; a red silk embroidered skirt for Apollo and a small red and yellow skirt with woven pattern for Mercury.

<sup>22</sup> F. C. van Boheemen and Th. C. J. van der Heijden, *De Delfse rederijkers 'Wy rapen Geneuht'* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982), pp. 109–19.

<sup>23</sup> The building of the *Nederduytsche Academie* founded by the playwright Samuel Coster in 1617 in an effort to combine the teaching of a university with the literary and dramatic activities of a Rhetoricians Chamber.

<sup>24</sup> See W. M. H. Hummelen, *Amsterdams toneel in het begin van de Gouden Eeuw: Studies over Het Wit Lavendel en de Nederduytsche Academie* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1982), pp. 106–19.

*Velzen*.<sup>25</sup> There were also two large wooden bars used for *Hersilia*, a play by A. van Mildert (1596–?), printed for the first time in 1632. Two large, black, linen curtains were used for closing off the stage. There is a mention of Achilles' tomb, which might have been used as scenery in Hooft's *Achilles en Polyxena*.<sup>26</sup> The same might be true of the triumphal chariot, perhaps used in a scene of the siege of Troy. Finally a small square altar is recorded.

A list of properties from the Noordwijk Chamber (1641) also records a number of items that can be related to theatrical activities. First of all a shield with a depiction of Pallas Athena and one with Medusa; a pair of clogs; a pair of antique mules or slippers; a leather bag; twelve crowns (one set with pearls); a sceptre; five plumes; Cupid's bow and quiver; Mercury's staff; three pairs of boots; three bells, one large and two small; and two spears. The list contains a separate section headed *Wapenen* (weapons) which has two weapons, two helmets, and two storm hats. It is not clear whether these were meant as props.

After 1620 public performances of plays as part of Rhetoricians competitions disappear. The Noordwijk Chamber was present at both Vlissingen and Rijnsburg in the same year, 1641; neither of these competitions featured performances of plays. The Chamber had the following costumes: a black and white cap; three fool's suits with caps; a black satin, hemmed dress; a black satin embroidered dress; an ash grey, satin jacket; a cloak with collar and cuffs of silver and green lace; a white satin cloak; two black 'elders', very likely costumes to dress elders; and a velvet vest and clothing for Mercury.

Perhaps sadly symbolic for the disappearance of plays and performances in Rhetoricians circles is the fact that in the late seventeenth-century inventory of the Rijswijk Chamber (1682) there is mention of an old chest with still a couple of rags and the fool's cap with the *marot*.

### *Furniture and Other Possessions*

The list of inventories also provides us with an impression of the interior and furnishings of a Chamber of Rhetoric. Apart from the shields, the statutes of the

<sup>25</sup> P. C. Hooft's (1581–1647) historical political tragedy *Geeraert van Velzen* (1613), ed. by F. A. Stoett (Zutphen: Thieme, 1976).

<sup>26</sup> *Achilles en Polyxena* was Hooft's first classical tragedy, written in c. 1598, before he embarked on his Grand Tour through France and Italy. For possible performance details, see P. C. Hooft, *Achilles en Polyxena*, ed. by Th. C. J. van der Heijden (Zutphen: Thieme, 1972) and Th. C. J. van der Heijden, 'Hooft theaterman van de Egelantier', *Dutch Crossing*, 14 (1981), 5–15.

Chambers must also have hung on the walls.<sup>27</sup> Sometimes such a *kaert of ordre* (statutes or list of rules) was painted on a wooden panel. Then there would have been panels with poems, either glued or painted on. The Leiden Gemeente Archief, town archive, still possesses twenty of these small panels with refrains from the last few years of the existence of the Chamber. Apart from the shields there would have been plenty of other paintings in the possession of the Chamber, such as the Noordwijk depictions on wood of Venus, Pallas Athena, and Medusa, even though records of these are scarce. Some Chambers had depictions of the Garden of Holland, the symbol of the Republic, or paintings of Entries of Chambers for competitions. The inventory from Leiden, for instance, records a painting with a 'verthoninghe van Dordrecht' (spectacle in Dordrecht).

What exactly this would have depicted is not clear: it could be a picture of a tableau vivant as part of a play or possibly a picture of the Entry of the Dordrecht Chamber at a competition in Leiden. There is quite a good painting (1620) of that occasion in the Dordrecht Museum. Some Chambers owned embroidered tapestries, such as did Haarlem's *Trou Moet Blijcken* in 1610: 'a beautiful tapestry cloth, which is in the Chamber, depicting a hunt and costing 36 guilders'.<sup>28</sup> The Leiden Chamber *De Witte Acoleyen* had a painted portrait of the famous, or rather, infamous, Leiden Fool Piero which hung, until the eighteenth century, above the door of the Chamber. Later on this painting turned up in the office of the town messengers in Leiden. A remarkable item in the Leiden inventory of 1561 is also that of the board which hung on the wall and which recorded the tally of drinks of each member.

The furniture consisted on the whole of rectangular tables and benches. There is a striking remark in the Leiden inventory that it too possessed benches in two tiers: the idea of a theatre, be it a small one, seems to show itself here. Apart from a varying number of chairs and benches we find a mention in a 1609 inventory from Haarlem that eleven members of the Chamber and an equal number of *beminders* (supporters) paid out of their own pockets for chairs with the arms and the device of the giver. The surviving inventories of a range of Chambers also show other furniture such as small tables, curtains, carpets, chair cushions, coat racks, chandeliers.

Frequently items of plate and crockery are recorded: beakers, bowls, jugs, serving dishes, plates, brandy cups, wine jugs, even butter dishes, mustard plates,

<sup>27</sup> See Leiden (1597), Maassluis (1633), and Rijswijk (1682). See Van Boheemen and Van der Heijden, *Retoricael Memoriael*, pp. 548, 661, 748.

<sup>28</sup> Bought from Willem van der Meye.

or salt cellars. Of the latter it is difficult to determine whether these were utensils or whether they were won as prizes in some competition (Fig. 23). What is fairly consistently mentioned is whether they were made of tin, silver, or glass. Some items are recorded as trophies. In the Leiden inventory of 1561 eleven large and small wine jugs are described as 'those which were won in Dordrecht, Rotterdam, and 's-Gravenhage with the old liberal art of rhetoric' which incidentally also confirms that there were competitions in those towns on those dates.

Similar information came from an inventory, unfortunately undated, of *De Goudsblom* (The Marigold) in Gouda from which it emerges that the Chamber had won prizes in Dordrecht, Rotterdam, Oudewater, Schoonhoven, Rijnsburg, and Noordwijk. Some of these prizes have survived, such as some tin beakers in the Leiden museum De Lakenhal which had been won as prizes in the seventeenth century by the Leiden Chamber *De Witte Acoleyen*.

The 'chest' features repeatedly: Chambers often had a lockable chest in which objects of value could be safeguarded. That was not a superfluous luxury since notwithstanding the locks there are records of items that disappeared *door diefte* (because they were stolen). For instance 'a silver dolphin, won in Haarlem in 1646, two silver beakers of which one won by the Fool and a carved copper picture of the shield' were stolen by ruffians.

In the Leiden chest (1597) were kept some hundred printed copies of the Entry there in 1596, a round box with two glass medallions, and a wooden rosary. In a second chest, fortified with iron bands, were eight silver and two copper shields and two wooden plaques. The same chest contained the privilege, that is, the statutes, of the Chamber, on parchment with the great seal in green hanging from red and white plaited silk ribbons and also a rectangular box with rolls of paper on which all the roles that had ever been played were written out.

In 1629 the retiring members of the local Chamber together with their fellow members, arrived at the Town Hall of 's-Gravezande to bring two boxes:

one decorated and the other not, in the first box the silver parrot with the weapons and the chain belonging to it, also a silk veil and a silver plate and in the other box the charters, one of the foundation of the chamber with the seal hanging from it written on parchment dating from the 11th of December 1484 and the other with the statutes of the chamber, signed at the time by the representative of the chamber and dated the 16th of February anno 1558.<sup>29</sup>

These treasures which for reasons unknown were handed in to the local magistrates were then safely put away in the *steedekist* (the town chest).

<sup>29</sup> ARA, R.A. 's-Gravenzande, inv. no. 68, d.d. 28-05-1629.





Figure 23. Pewter wine jug of the Leiden Chamber *De Witte Acoleyen*; seventeenth century; *De Lakenhal*, Leiden.

Photo F. C. van Boheemen and Th. C. J. van der Heijden.

### *Archival Data Compared with the Iconographic Material*

Chambers of Rhetoric were used a few times as settings for certain painted scenes. Jan Steen for instance depicted the subject of the Rhetoricians in a satirical fashion in several of his paintings, in particular the members of a Chamber and the audience. Little can be seen of the actual space of the Chamber except a shield, a banner, and a wine jug.

A much better impression can be gained from the paintings of Job A. van Bercheyde<sup>30</sup> and Pieter Molijn (d. Haarlem 1661). In the Bercheyde painting in the collection of Schloss Grünewald in Berlin a rehearsal of a Haarlem Chamber is represented, complete with costumes. Van Bercheyde was familiar with rehearsals: from 1666 to 1682 he was active in various functions in the Haarlem Chamber *De Wyngaertrancken*, as Emperor, member of the Council, and for years, *Factor*. At the end of his life he wrote a number of texts for *Trou Moet Blijcken*. The painting clearly shows the shields hanging on the wall, on the mantelpiece the collection of pewter and the banner. The Chamber would seem to be furnished with a double-tiered bench such as was mentioned in the inventory of the Leiden Chamber (1597); in the corner of the room is a hanging cupboard for books or trophies (Fig. 24).

An even more interesting picture of a Chamber of Rhetoric is that on a painting of 1659 ascribed to Pieter Molijn (Fig. 25). This is meant as a satire on the religious troubles which began during the Twelve Year Truce and shows the Chamber, very likely *De Wyngaertrancken* again, as a setting for quarrelling theologians, seated round a table and elsewhere in the room, voicing their opinions by means of text boards. On the right of the table is Calvin who carries a board on a ribbon. Opposite Calvin, amongst others, a catholic priest and obliquely opposite him a lute player (i.e. Luther); left in the foreground is the catering manager who pours wine. However, we are not concerned here with the theological texts representing the various religious factions.<sup>31</sup> The right hand wall shows the three shields of the Haarlem Chambers, left *Trou Moet Blijcken* (also known as *De Pellicanisten*), in the middle *Liefd' Boven Al* (or *De Wyngaertrancken*), and on

<sup>30</sup> Van Bercheyde (1630–93) became a member of the Painters' Guild of St Luke in Haarlem. He made townscapes, interiors, landscapes, genre pieces, some portraits, and some biblical paintings.

<sup>31</sup> Further interpretation of this allegorical painting can be found in J. F. M. Sterck, *Van rederijkerskamer tot Muiderkring* (Amsterdam: De Spieghel, 1928), pp. 97–103, and A. van Duinkerken, *Achter de vuurlijn* (Hilversum: Brand, 1930), pp. 47–48.

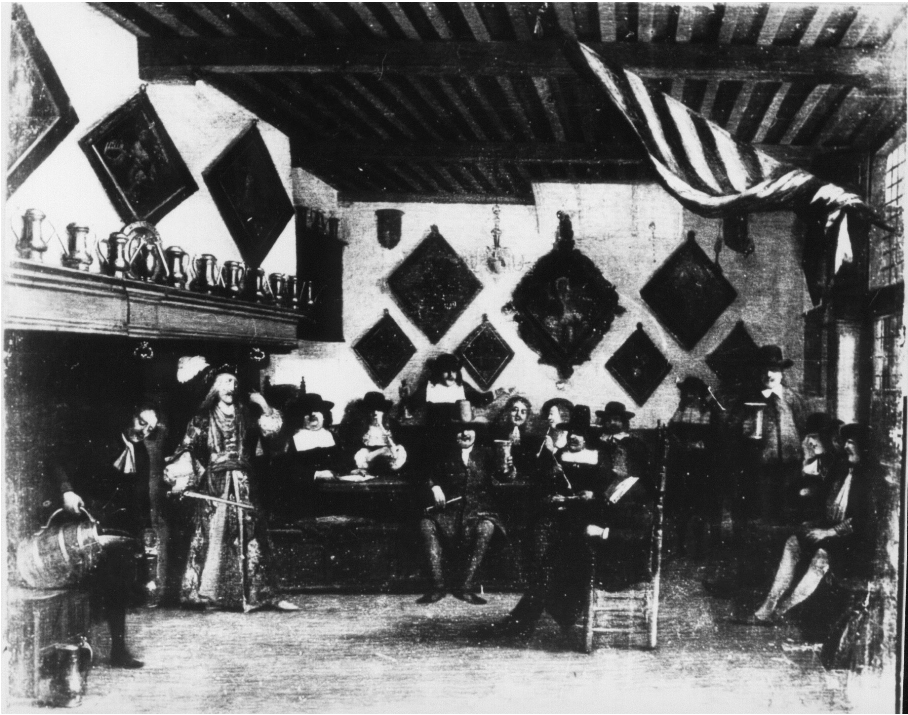


Figure 24. Painting of Rhetoricians meeting by J. A. van Bercheyde;  
before 1693; Schloss Grünewald, Berlin.

the right *In Liefd' Getrouw* (*Het Wit Angierken*) with in between the old and the new coat of arms of the city of Haarlem. In the middle of the rear wall above the chimney hangs a painting, an allegorical representation of the Leiden Chamber *De Witte Acoleyen* with their motto *Liefde is 't Fondament*. To the left is Lady Rhetoric and on the right of the chimney Bacchus sits on a barrel. Above it and across it is the red, white, and blue, unofficial, flag of the Republic. Below the painting and across the width of the chimney breast is a text:

If All Men would remember Christ's last words  
that He Alone intended love's works  
and how the Merciful would inherit his realm  
I'd be in the heart, not above the chimney.

Left, below Lady Rhetoric, is a cupboard with glass doors in which the trophies of the Chamber can be discerned. On the right is a cupboard with its book collection and below the trophy cupboard is a piece of paper with

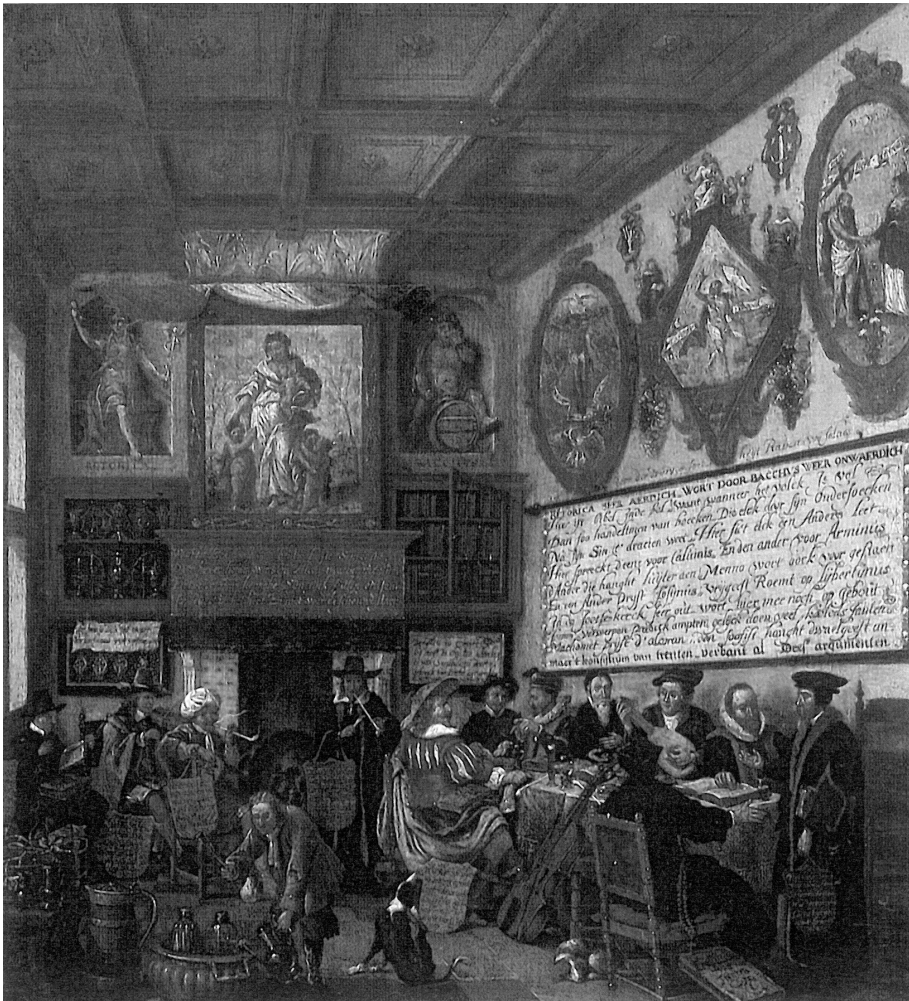


Figure 25. Pieter Molijn, painting of interior of Rhetoricians Chamber; 1659; Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem.

Question: Who holds love in a word  
and yet is pushed aside?

Under the bookcase the text continues:

Answer: Love is held in the word  
of most of the Christian clerks  
and is pushed to the side  
through lack of righteous works.

Below the *Question* four, probably silver, Rhetoricians shields are framed behind glass.

Both Van Bercheyde's and Molijn's paintings provide an impression of the interior of a Chamber of Rhetoric in accordance with that which emerges from the archival material. The combination of the two sources allows us to imagine an excellent picture of the environment in which Rhetoricians held their gatherings.

Much, presumably, has been lost in the course of time. A few museums yield a number of shields on wooden panels and also small silver shields; some pewter vases and some glassware have survived. The last time that a number of artefacts was exhibited was in an exhibition in Huize Scheybeeck, a public museum in Beverwijk. Since that time more has been found,<sup>32</sup> and it would seem to be timely to organize a new exhibition of all those objects which can be proven to have direct connections with the Rhetoricians. Until then we have to make do with the dry remarks in the inventories and other archival documents and the paintings by Jan Steen, Pieter Molijn, and Job van Bercheyde.

<sup>32</sup> As in the painted devices on wooden panels of, amongst others, Rijswijk, Maassluis, Maasland, and various silver devices.

## PRODUCING LATE MEDIEVAL DUTCH PLAYS TODAY

Femke Kramer<sup>1</sup>

### *Theatre Company Marot*

In the late 1980s, Theatre Company Marot started as a nameless, motley collection of students and teachers of Dutch literature, involved in productions ensuing from seminars on sixteenth-century drama. After that the troupe developed into a company of enthusiastic and experienced amateur performers that for nearly thirteen years undertook modern theatre productions on the basis of the huge but as yet relatively unknown heritage of some six hundred dramatic texts surviving from the *rederijkers*. These were poets, playwrights, actors, for the most part non-professional, who united in Chambers of Rhetoric and dominated the literary and dramatic production of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Low Countries.

Unlike many other countries, neither the Netherlands nor Belgium cherishes their medieval and late medieval dramatic heritage by putting the plays on the modern stage — all the more surprising in view of the quantity, the quality, and the historical importance of the early drama of the Low Countries. Marot was the only company that specializes in the staging of these plays and built up a reputation that took the group to festivals in Britain, Canada, Italy, France, and Denmark.

Initially, Marot's methodology of performance adhered fairly closely to the Anglo-American practice which came into being in the 1950s and which was developed most successfully by Meg Twycross (University of Lancaster) in the

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Elsa Strietman for her contribution to this paper.

1980s and 1990s. Performance of medieval and late medieval English drama was driven by the wish to try and understand the texts not as written documents but as scripts for performance. By trying to reconstruct as faithfully as possible the décor, costumes, mise en scène, and style of acting it was hoped that the dramaturgical method which the original performers had followed would become clear. Moreover, such a reconstruction would then elucidate the intention and the meaning of the plays.

Marot's earliest performances, such as that of *Hue Mars en Venus tsaemen bueleerden* (*How Mars and Venus dallied together*) were shaped by this Anglo-American reconstruction ideology. Though this stimulated much literary historical, historical, and theatre historical research, the limitations of this approach soon were felt to be irksome and to pose more questions and problems than it solved. Gradually a new methodology was developed based on the wish to *recontextualize* the plays, that is, to try and find a method of staging with which as many aspects and facets of the plays as possible could be given meaning for a modern audience. This required that such a text would be 'translated' into situations and concepts with which a modern audience could identify. Over the years this has resulted in a very distinctive, some would say idiosyncratic, Marot style, which seems to be particularly suited to performances of comic drama, though not exclusively so, as one of the last Marot productions, *Maria*, demonstrated.

Marot usually opted for comic pieces from the extensive heritage of plays because these offer possibilities for the playful acting style in which the troupe felt successful. Another reason for this choice was that Marot was frequently invited to perform abroad and the genre of farce makes good theatre for audiences who cannot understand the language of the play. This is not as easy as one might think; many late medieval farce intrigues have a verbal crux such as a figurative expression taken literally or vice versa. Occasionally, however, Marot staged more serious plays: a *spel van sinne* (allegorical play), an *abel spel* (a courtly play) such as *Esmoreit*, or a mystery play such as *Die eerste bliscap*.

Extensive literary and historical research formed the basis for the Marot productions, and inspiration for concept and design was often drawn from sixteenth-century textual, musical, and pictorial sources. Both of the directors are literary historians, specializing in the medieval and sixteenth-century literature of the Low Countries. Yet, Marot did not produce 'museum pieces', claiming to be reconstructions of bygone theatre traditions on the merely exterior, material level of 'original' language, dress, and setting. This was partly a matter of practical impediments — if only because of the sixteenth-century Dutch language, which is as incomprehensible to the actors as it would be for a modern audience. More

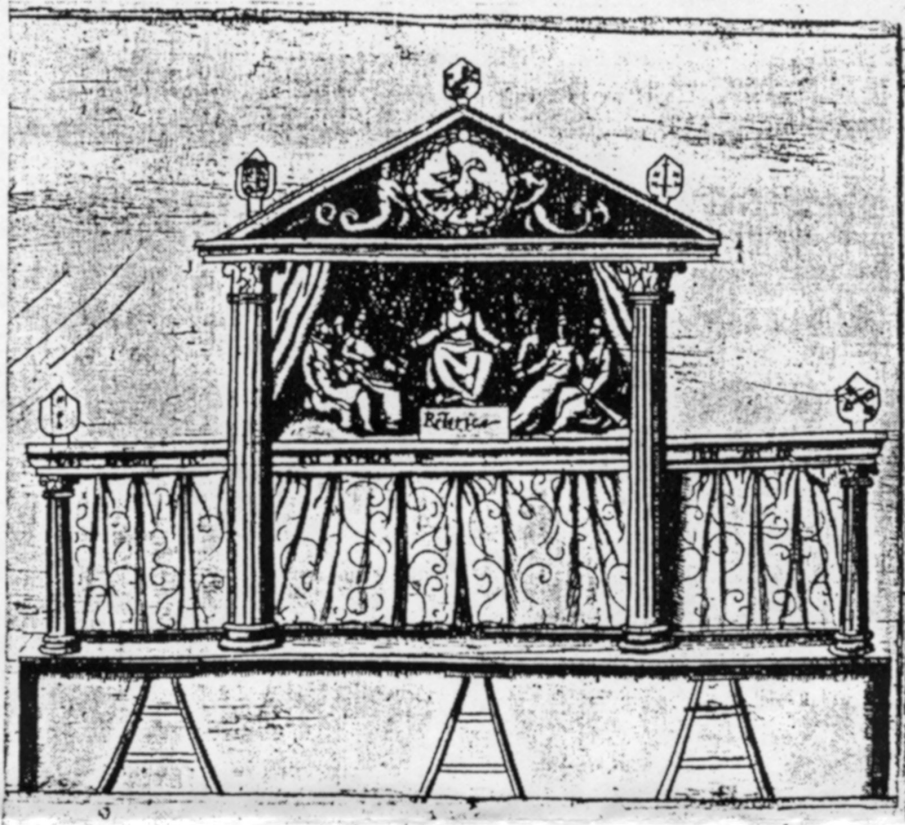


Figure 26. Stage for a Rhetoricians competition, Haarlem, 1606.  
Collection of W. M. H. Hummelen.

importantly, however, and as a matter of principle, Marot aimed at direct communication with a contemporary audience, without forcing them to consult dictionaries and footnotes, at the level of the general intentions of the plays. For example, Marot's favourite genre, the farce, arouses fun and laughter, even for those who do not understand the language. As Nerida Newbigin wrote in a review of *Esmoreit* and *Schaamstreken*, 'Captivating performances and costumes — including a cow with an udder ring — made the fact that none of the audience understood Dutch gratifyingly irrelevant'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 38 (1999), 140–44 (p. 141).



### *Hue Mars en Venus tsaemen bueleerden*

A group of students (Marot *avant la lettre*) from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Groningen (Netherlands) performed *Hue Mars en Venus tsaemen bueleerden* (*How Mars and Venus dallied together*) on the occasion of a Festival of Medieval and Renaissance Theatre in Groningen in 1991; directors were Evelien Harberink and Femke Kramer. The stage design, by Femke Kramer, was based on a drawing of a Rhetoricians' competition in Haarlem (1606).

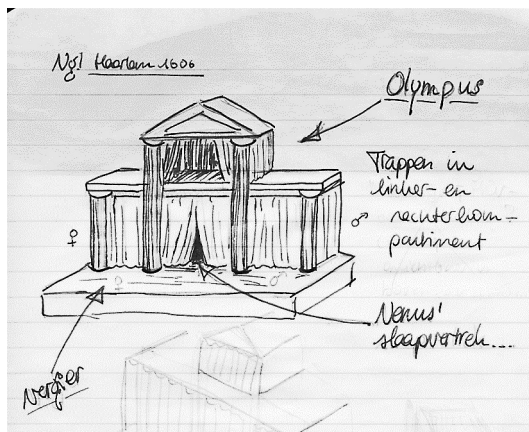


Figure 27. Stage design, *Mars en Venus*, Groningen 1991 (based on the drawing of the Haarlem stage in 1606). Drawing F. Kramer.

*Hue Mars en Venus tsaemen bueleerden* is a dramatization of the ancient myth of the adultery committed by the goddess of Love and the god of War. It was written by the town poet Jan Smeecken of Brussels in 1500. As is common in the *spelen van sinne* (allegorical plays), human, or, as in this case, divine, aberrations are caused by a pair of *sinneken*, representing the flaws in human nature, who lead the characters astray.



Figure 28.  
*Mars en Venus*,  
Groningen  
1991. Photo  
Meg Twycross.

*Minnevader voor de Lieve Heer*

Theatre Company Marot performed *Minnevader voor de Lieve Heer* (*Foster Father of Our Lord*) on the occasion of a farewell celebration in honour of Professor W. M. H. Hummelen on his retirement from the University of Nijmegen in 1993.

*Minnevader voor de Lieve Heer* is based on the sixteenth-century farce *Van ons Lievenheers minnevaer*, by Lauris Jansz., the *factor* of the Haarlem Chamber of Rhetoric *De Wyngaertrancken* (The Vine Branches). In this play a poor husband and wife literally believe that their numerous brood of children is actually fathered by Our Lord. They set out to try and get reimbursement of their expenses and finally end up in Rome where God's representative lives. The Pope refuses to give them the remuneration they ask for and instead offers them indulgences, but as the foster father says, 'indulgences cannot fill the stomachs of little children'.

The humour of the play lies in the typical farcical elements of misunderstanding and absurdity. Marot's interpretation emphasized the harrowing contrast between the poverty and lack of learning of the couple and the hypocrisy and arrogance of the characters of *Goet Onderwijs* (Good Instruction) and the debauched Pope.

*De Kleren van de Dokter*

Theatre Company Marot performed *De Kleren van de Dokter* (*The doctor's clothes*) in Groningen, Wassenaar, Winsum, and Brouwershaven (Netherlands) and at the Société Internationale pour L'Etude du Théâtre Médiéval Colloquium in Toronto (Canada) in 1995.

The original text of this farce, entitled *Weer Gheluck ende Heer Profijt* (*Misfortune and Sir Profit*) has survived in a sixteenth-century manuscript from the Chamber of Rhetoric *Die Roode Lelie* (The red lily) from Brouwershaven, Zeeland. Marot produced this farce with the title *De Kleren van de Dokter*. In it, the two 'heroes' fake lameness and severe infirmity in order to qualify for free lodging and care in the nearby hospital and manage to make the Master believe that their illness calls for the consumption of immense quantities of food and drink. The Master grows suspicious and summons a physician. The doctor immediately detects the trickery but decides to go along with the villains and examines them carefully. The diagnosis is alarming: they have contracted a disease from which only the one least affected can be cured; the only possible remedy is a medicine made out of the ashes of the other *malade imaginaire*. Terrified by this proposed treatment, the rogues 'miraculously' recover from their curious



Figure 29. Pope enthroned, *Minnevader voor de Lieve Heer*, 1993. Photo F. Kramer.

disease and take to their heels. In the second part of the farce, the villains take revenge by tricking the doctor into taking off his heavy, expensive robe, which they steal and then sell.

John Cartwright, in a review of *De Kleren van de Dokter*, wrote, ‘in this production, the actors succeeded in finding the balance of careful discipline and manic energy that is so essential for effective performance in this genre [. . .]. All

together then, Marot's production was an imaginative, thoughtful and energetic one, which neither patronized, nor idolized the original text, and which provided both immediate enjoyment and food for reflection on the nature and functioning of dramatic and theatrical convention'.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 30. A Scoundrel fed by the Master of the hospital, *De Kleren van de Dokter*, 1995. Photo Albert Compagner.



Figure 31. Two Scoundrels being fed.  
Photo Albert Compagner.

<sup>3</sup> *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 35 (1996), 134–36.



Figure 32. Master and Quack. Photo Albert Compagner.

Figure 33. Tableau de la troupe. Photo Albert Compagner.



### *Zand erover*

Theatre Company Marot performed *Zand erover* (*Bury it in the sand*) in Groningen and Warffum in 1996–97.

*Zand erover* is a Dutch expression meaning ‘let bygones be bygones’. The play is based on two late-medieval Dutch farces: *Vanden Blinde diet tgelt begroef* (*Of the Blind Man who buried the money*) from the collection of the Haarlem Chamber of Rhetoric *Trou Moet Blijcken* and *Vanden Visscher* (*Of the Fisherman*) by the Bruges Rhetorician Cornelis Everaert. *Vanden Blinde* is a typical *à trompeur*, *trompeur-et-demi* intrigue, about a cobbler who robs a blind man of his treasure,

and who in turn is cleverly tricked into restoring the money by the blind man's servant. *Vanden Visscher* deals with the adventures of a fisherman and his wife who are caught in a thunderstorm at sea. Fearing that they will soon die, they decide to hear each other's confession. The woman has to admit that two of her sons were fathered by the parish priest and by a servant. When it is her husband's turn to confess, the storm dies down. When they have safely returned to shore, the fisherman curses his bastards, but his wife cleverly gives her confession a twist: Wasn't her husband himself her servant when he rowed their boat? And wasn't he also her priest when he heard her confession?

In *Zand erover*, these two plays are interwoven into an intrigue worthy of Boccaccio in which all the characters are interrelated: the cobbler is the fisherman's eldest (and real) son, and the blind man and his servant are the former parish priest and servant who have fathered the other two sons. The whole story was set on the Dutch seashore. The set design was deliberately artificial, consisting of flat, cardboard sand dunes, which could easily be turned into the waves of the sea or a fishing boat.



Figure 34. Fisherman and Wife confess at sea, *Zand erover*, 1996–97.  
Photo Joan Winter.



Figure 35.  
Fisherman and  
boat. Photo Joan  
Winter.

Figure 36. Servant  
buries blind man's  
treasure. Photo  
Joan Winter.



Figure 37.  
Fisherman repairs  
nets. Photo Joan  
Winter.



Figure 38. Tableau de la troupe in boat. Photo Joan Winter.

### *Esmoreit*

Theatre Company Marot performed *Esmoreit* in the Netherlands and in Camerino (Italy) in 1997.

*Esmoreit* is one of the four well-known *abele spelen* from the *Van Hulthem-manuscript*. The play portrays the adventures of the young Crown Prince of Sicily, who is kidnapped and nearly killed as a baby and then grows up as the supposed brother of the Princess of Damast. His mother, the Queen of Sicily, is falsely accused of murdering her son, and imprisoned. Eighteen years later, after finding out that he is a foundling instead of the son of the King of Damast, Esmoreit falls in love with the Princess, and goes on a quest for his parents. When he finally finds them, he sets his mother free and executes the villain Robbrecht who was responsible for his kidnapping. His beloved Princess becomes his bride.

The Marot interpretation of this play draws on evidence that it is based on a fairy tale but also contains elements reminiscent of miracle plays. The oriental world was depicted as an 'other' world in strong contrast to the almost military human world of the Sicilian court. (See costume design below for The King of Sicily and Robbrecht.)





Figure 39. Queen  
of Sicily in prison,  
*Esmoreit*, 1997.  
Photo F. Kramer.



Figure 40. King and  
Queen mourn loss of  
baby Esmoreit.  
Photo F. Kramer

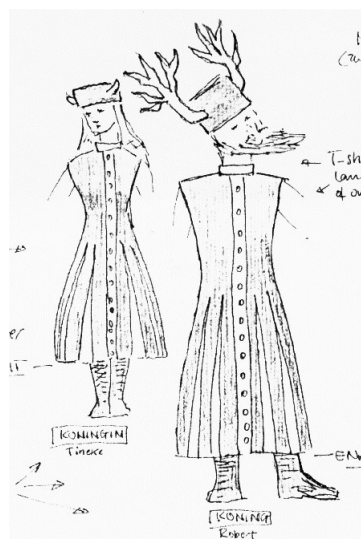
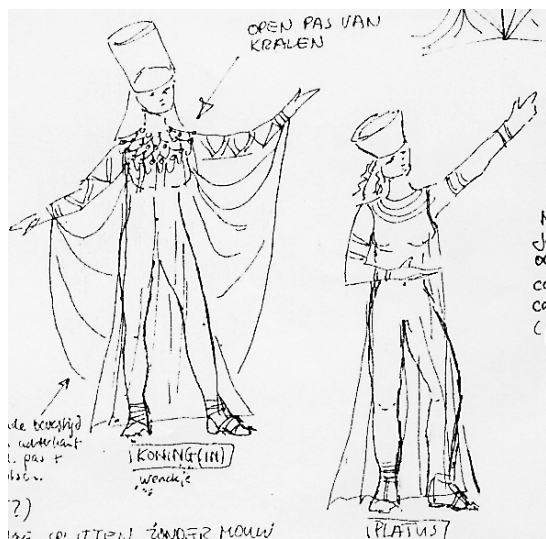


Figure 41 (above left).  
Costume design. Drawing  
F. Kramer.

Figure 42 (above right).  
Costume design. Drawing  
F. Kramer.

Figure 43 (right). King of  
Sicily and Robbrecht. Photo  
F. Kramer.





Figure 44. Imprisonment of the Queen of Sicily. Photo F. Kramer.



Figure 45. Platus gives baby Esmoreit to Queen of Damast and Damiët. Photo F. Kramer.

### *Schaamstreken*

Theatre Company Marot performed *Schaamstreken* in Groningen and Winsum (Netherlands), Camerino (Italy), Leeds (United Kingdom), and at the Société Internationale pour L'Etude du Théâtre Médiéval Colloquium in Odense (Denmark) in 1998.

The modern title of the play, *Schaamstreken*, is a pun on the Dutch words for 'genital area' and 'dirty tricks'. It is based on a sixteenth-century farce, *Van Lippen, Lijse ende van Jan Vleermuis*, in Book G of the collection of the Haarlem

Chamber of Rhetoric, *De Pellicanisten* (device: *Trou Moet Blycken*). The plot merges two story lines: a traditional adultery plot (married woman meets handsome lover) and a typical villain script. In the latter, two villains burgle a woman's house while her husband is asleep, dress in the clothes she left at home, and put on a feast with the stolen food.

In the Marot staging of this play, the typical Rhetoricians device of two *sinnekens*, which usually occurs only in the serious *spelen van sinne* (allegorical plays), was inserted. The *sinnekens* teased and provoked the characters and inveigled them into committing their petty crimes. The atmosphere and the appearance of the performance was exuberant and the acting style graphic, in order to evoke a carnivalesque mood.



Figure 46. *Sinnekens, Schaamstreken*, 1998.  
Photo Mimi van der Hoeven.

Marla Carlson, in a review of *Schaamstreken*, wrote: 'This was not a museum recreation, but a piece of living theatre that captured the spirit of the original in a way that careful historical accuracy does not always manage. In the end, however, the approach was less important than the creative energy and skill of the artists.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Western European Stages*, II (1999).

Figure 47 (right). Lize and *sinneken*. Photo Mimi van der Hoeven.

Figure 48 (below). Thieves. Photo Mimi van der Hoeven.





Figure 49 (above).  
*Sinneken*. Photo  
F. Kramer.

Figure 50 (left).  
*Sinneken* watch Lize's  
seduction. Photo  
Jacques Tersteeg.



Figure 51. *Sinnekens* seducing a thief. Photo Mimi van der Hoeven.



Figure 52. Tableau de la troupe. Photo Jacques Tersteeg.



### *Pek en Veren*

Theatre Company Marot performed *Pek en Veren* (*Tar and Feathers*) in the Netherlands and in Camerino (Italy) in 1999.

An alleged rejuvenation is the core of *Pek and Veren*, based on the sixteenth-century Dutch farce *Jan Goemoete* (*John Goodmood*), from the collection of the Zeeland Chamber of Rhetoric *De Roode Lelie*. The intrigue combines a plot involving marital problems (a wife complains about her husband's impotence and incompetence) with one involving a quack doctor. In this play the quack is not the usual clumsy factotum but a crafty fraud, who manages to sell his victim an expensive rejuvenation treatment which is in fact a tar ointment with a follow-up treatment in a feather bed. Confusing her noisily sleeping husband with an evil spirit the victim's wife subsequently hires the quack as an exorcist.

Invariably, farces with alleged possessions and exorcisms have a reassuring dénouement: it all turns out to be a silly misunderstanding. *Jan Goemoete* is no exception to this rule, but in the staging of the play by Marot the exorcism actually ended with the appearance of the devil.



Figure 53. The Quack's servant, *Pek en Veren*, 1999. Photo F. Kramer.

Figure 54. Bate threatened by the devil. Photo F. Kramer.



Figure 55. Klaas, the Quack, and his servants. Photo F. Kramer.

Figure 56. Bate and Klaas (I). Photo F. Kramer.





Figure 57 (above). Bate and Klaas (2). Photo F. Kramer.



Figure 58 (left). Master Driekus Beneficus. Photo F. Kramer.



Figure 59. Bate dressing up. Photo F. Kramer.



Figure 60. Bate’s neighbours. Photo F. Kramer.



Figure 61. Installation of altar for exorcism. Photo F. Kramer.

### *Maria*

Theatre Company Marot performed *Maria* nine times on a farm in the countryside near Kantens, a hamlet in the province of Groningen in the summer and autumn of 2001. Two of the performances were part of the International Medieval Theatre Festival organized in Groningen on the occasion of the tenth SITM Colloquium in July 2001.

*Maria* was based on the mystery play *Die eerste bliscap van Maria* (*The First Joy of Mary*), one of two surviving texts of a series of seven, first written and produced in the mid-fifteenth century and continuing to be performed till well into the 1550s. *Die eerste bliscap* recounts crucial passages from the history of salvation, making use of biblical and apocryphal sources, starting with the Fall of Mankind and ending with the Annunciation.

In Marot's large-scale adaptation of the play, new dimensions were added to the original text by interpolating scenes and texts from a number of different sources. Beginning with a Big Bang, which symbolized the Creation of the World, a dialogue between Lucifer and God was inserted, borrowed from Arthur Miller's *The Creation of the World and Other Business*. It also incorporated verses from a fourteenth-century Bible, passages from *vitae* of Our Lady, and visions from the writings of the Dutch medieval mystic Hadewijch. Further use was made of medieval and modern iconographical images, and of dance and music, combining medieval polyphony with twentieth-century rock music. Some scenes were deliberately interpreted in anachronistic ways, such as the miracle of the flowering rod, which presented the choice of Joseph as Mary's future husband set in a sleazy dating show. The two central characters in the play, God and Mary, were given substantial new dimensions and individual traits.



The performance centred on three emotional moments in which Mary encountered the Creator. Mary herself was presented as a human being, passing from girlhood to maturity. This humanization of Mary entailed an emotionally poignant ending: she refuses to accept the role of the Mother of the Saviour. The audience reactions to this differed considerably: some found it disturbing; others experienced it as a relief. Whatever these differences, it was clear that the production succeeded in creating an intense involvement of the audiences with the story and the performance.

Figure 62. Adam and Eve, *Maria*, 2001.  
Photo Anko C. Wieringa.



Figure 63. God and Mary. Photo J. J. Winter.





Figure 64. Mercy, the Daughter of God. Photo J. J. Winter.

### *Cocagne*

The Marot production of *Cocagne* had its premiere in France where it was performed on the occasion of the conference 'Dieu et les dieux dans le théâtre de la Renaissance' at the Centre des Études Supérieures de la Renaissance (CESR) at the University of Tours in July 2002.

The characters of *Cocagne* lust after the fulfilment of gastronomic and erotic desires which is reserved for the inhabitants of the legendary Land of Cocagne. With a refined sadistic pleasure, two *sinnekens*, agents provocateurs of trouble and disorder, arouse the basest instincts in their victims who allow themselves to be seduced by gluttony and envy. *Cocagne* is a collage of three old Dutch texts. First, the *sotternie Die Hexe* (*The Witch*), an early fifteenth-century text from the *Van Hulthem-manuscript*. Secondly, the sixteenth-century *esbatement* (an entertaining play) *Hanneken Leckertant* (*Johnny Sweet Tooth*) written by the Antwerp Rhetorician Jan van den Berghe. It was a very popular play in its time and it won several prizes. Thirdly, the narrative of the Land of Cocagne, a story well-known throughout Europe from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, is incorporated into the farce. The performance was enhanced by contemporary songs, such as the Song of the Churls, from the famous fourteenth-century *Gruuthuse manuscript*, the Song of the Barn, and the Ode to the Turd, the latter an adaptation of an old Dutch ballad.



Figure 65. Hansje and Leipe, *Cocagne*, 2002. Photo Mimi van der Hoeven.



Figure 66. *Hanneken Leckertant* begs for food. Photo Mimi van der Hoeven.



Figure 67. *The Storyteller*. Photo Mimi van der Hoeven.

## GLOSSARY

***Abele Spelen*** ‘Ingenious or witty plays’. Subtitle of four serious, secular, and ‘romantic’ plays in the *Van Hulthem-manuscript* (c. 1410). Each of these is linked in the manuscript to a *farce* or *sotternie* which to some extent satirizes the theme of the preceding *abel spel*. There are two similarly conceived but freestanding *farces* in the manuscript.

***Factor*** The literary leader of a Chamber of Rhetoric, sometimes a poet of professional standing but sometimes an amateur who undertook other official functions or posts, such as that of town clerk or schoolmaster. Occasionally they were in Holy Orders.

***Landjuweel*** Name given to a competition of Chambers of Rhetoric in the Duchy of Brabant and denoting a contest which took place every seven years. The winner had the honour of organizing the next competition. The prizes took the form of costly objects of silver, hence the reference to ‘juweel’, that is, jewel.

***Ommegang*** Procession, either religious or civic.

***Questie*** A set theme which Chambers participating in a competition were expected to use for their plays.

***Refereyn*** A poetic form specially associated with the Rhetoricians and distinguished by a recurring line at the end of every stanza. *Refereynen* were written in three different categories, *int vroede* (i.e. on a serious, often religious, topic), *int sotte* (i.e. on a comic topic), and *int amoureuze* (i.e. on an amorous topic).

***Sinnekens*** Usually a pair of personified abstractions, working closely together, often in a comic way, and embodying aspects of human behaviour or moral themes relevant to the action and meaning of the play.

***Sotternie*** Short plays which show human folly in a farcical manner.

***Spel van sinne*** Allegorical play of serious intent, often written on a theme or *questie* if composed for a competition, roughly equivalent to a morality play.

***Tafelspelen*** ‘Table plays’, that is, short entertaining plays performed in between courses of a banquet or as interludes between other plays.

***Tooch*** A pictorial representation of a theme or situation, often religious or moral, taking the form of paintings or tableaux vivants.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Fabian van Boheemen** studied Dutch language and literature at the University of Groningen and got his doctorate, together with Theo van der Heijden, for an extensive research project on the Rhetoricians in the Dutch province of Holland which was published in two volumes under the title *Met Minnen Versaemt: De Hollandse rederijders vanaf de middeleeuwen tot het begin van de achttiende eeuw*. (Delft: Eburon, 1999). Apart from this he published two other books and several articles on the Chambers of Rhetoric in the province of Holland.

**Peter Happé** retired as principal of Barton Peveril Sixth Form College in 1989, and he is now a Visiting Fellow in the Department of English in the University of Southampton. He has edited several texts of medieval plays and of comedies by Ben Jonson. His most recent publication is a study of Cycle Plays in England and Europe. He is at present working on the Towneley Plays and contributing to the new Cambridge edition of the works of Ben Jonson.

**Th. J. C. van der Heijden** studied Dutch Language and Literature at the University of Leiden and at present teaches at the Stanislascollege in Delft. He published an edition of a play by the seventeenth-century poet and playwright P. C. Hooft, *Achilles and Polyxena*, and, together with F. van Boheemen, two monographs on Rhetoricians in Delft and in the Westland, part of the province of Holland, as well as articles on Holland Chambers of Rhetoric. This culminated in their joint two-volume PhD dissertation, *Met Minnen Versaemt: De Hollandse rederijders vanaf de middeleeuwen tot het begin van de achttiende eeuw* (Delft: Eburon, 1999).

**W. M. H. Hummelen** studied Dutch Language and Literature at the University of Groningen. His PhD dissertation was published as *De Sinneken in het Rederijkersdrama* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1958) and has long been a standard work in Rhetoricians studies as has his bibliographical collection of Rhetoricians plays, *Repertorium van het rederijkersdrama (1500–1620)* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1968). He has published other books and numerous articles on medieval and Renaissance drama and performance practices in the Low Countries.

**Wim Hüsken** is currently curator of the Municipal Museums of Mechelen, Belgium. He is a specialist in late medieval and early Renaissance culture, notably theatre and drama. He held several positions as lecturer and senior lecturer at universities in The Netherlands, Australia, England, and New Zealand. His most recent major publication is the edition of the complete play collection by the Bruges playwright Cornelis Everaert (c. 1480–1556) in two volumes, which appeared in print in 2005 (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren). Wim Hüsken is also chief editor of *Ludus: Medieval and Early Renaissance Theatre and Drama*, published by Editions Rodopi in Amsterdam.

**Alan E. Knight** is Professor Emeritus of French at the Pennsylvania State University. He is the author of *Aspects of Genre in Late Medieval French Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983) and the editor of *The Stage as Mirror: Civic Theatre in Late Medieval Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997). He has also written numerous articles on the history and social function of theatre in medieval and early modern France. He is currently editing the seventy-two mystery plays from Lille preserved in a fifteenth-century manuscript in the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Germany. Three of the projected five volumes of the project have so far been published: *Les Mystères de la Procession de Lille* (Geneva: Droz, 2001–04).

**Lynette Muir** was Reader in French and Director of the Centre for Medieval Studies in the University of Leeds. Since taking early retirement in 1983 she has worked on pan-European medieval drama. *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe* was published in 1995. She is currently working on a companion volume on the non-biblical serious drama: *Love and Conflict in Medieval Drama: The Plays and their Legacy* (forthcoming, 2006) analyses the stories behind medieval miracle, historical, or saints plays and their survival in early modern drama up to about 1630.

**Bart Ramakers** is Professor of Historical Dutch literature at the University of Groningen. He specializes in medieval drama and the drama and culture of the Dutch Rhetoricians. He published a seminal book on the theatrical and processional culture of the Rhetoricians, focusing on the town of Oudenaarde. He recently edited and contributed to a collection of essays on Rhetoricians culture between 1400 and 1650, and he is at present engaged in research on the collection of plays of the Haarlem Chamber *Trou Moet Blijcken*.

**Elsa Strietman** is the University Senior Lecturer in Dutch and a Fellow and Tutor for Graduate Students in New Hall, Cambridge. She is responsible for the Dutch Section of the Department of Other Languages in the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages at the University of Cambridge. Her research is focused on the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century drama in the Low Countries, particularly that produced by the Chambers of Rhetoric. Most of her work in this respect studies the historical, political, social, and religious aspects of the plays and the importance of the Chambers within their communities. She has also translated a number of Rhetoricians plays into English and six of these, translated together with Peter Happé, will be published as *For Profit and Pleasure*.

**Meg Twycross** is Professor Emeritus of English Medieval Studies at Lancaster University, co-editor of *Medieval English Theatre*, and co-director of the York *Doomsday* Project. Her latest major publication (with Sarah Carpenter) is *Masks and Masking in Medieval and Early Tudor England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002). She is currently particularly interested in the practicalities of the 'virtual restoration' of medieval manuscripts through the medium of high-resolution digital scans, and in the possible links between England and the Low Countries in the later Middle Ages and the early sixteenth century in the field of theatre and pageantry.

**Gary Waite** is Professor of Early Modern European History at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, where he has taught since 1987. He is a specialist of early modern European history, with a particular interest in the religious and cultural attitudes of Netherlanders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His current research is on the persecution of heretics and witches in the sixteenth century, and recent books include *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003), and *Reformers on Stage: Popular Drama and Religious Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515–1556* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).